

DYNASTIC HISTORY OF NALAS



C. B. PATEL

THE BOOK

The book, presents the history and culture of Central-Eastern India (Orissa and Madhya-pradesh) the nerve centre of Indian political and cultural junction, under the rule of the Nala dynasty, dipping into the vast spectrum of space and time (C. 300-1000 A.D.). Propounded on a series of archaeological serendipities and surveys, the study is unique in its exposition with altogether a new orientation in historiography and approach of a hitherto lesser known more renowned dynastic rule. The complex ancient geographical frontiers of Daksina Kolala, Kantara and Nisadha etc., along with the capital city of Kosala, as described by Yuan Chwang, have been identified and aptly dealt with and the original homeland, origin and originator of the Nala dynasty have been traced out.

Cultural efflorescence, the bed rock of civilisation, as manifested in all its exuberance and ramifications have been amply reflected. The theme of emergence and diffusion of major cultural traits and trends, religious and secular, in the Vindhyan region in the upper Mahanadi valley, from the Nisadha country of the Nalas is another hallmark of the book. Being a pioneering work of Nala dynasty the book singularly stands as a rare piece of research work of an epochal annal.

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*HISTORY AND CULTURE OF CENTRAL EASTERN INDIA,
ORISSA-MADHYA PRADESH under THE NALAS*

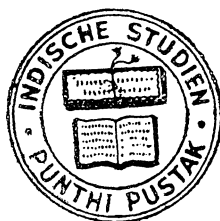
(C. 300 - 1000 A.D.)

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Dedicated to

Late Dr. N. K. SAHU

my adorable teacher as token of my deep regards

PROLOGUE

It is difficult to delve into the antiquities and come up with cocksure findings. Systematic chronicling of potentially historical data is a recent phenomenon. And myth, legends, hyperboles and later-day interpolations do sometimes shroud the traceable source-texts. The process of probe, therefore, involves an approximation by tentative reconstruction : limiting the alternative probabilities to the minimum by eliminating the rest on the basis of the scarce materials of original and collateral sources and the plausible inferences derived therefrom.

In his work, **Dynastic History of Nalas**, Dr. Chandra Bhanu Patel has garnered valuable materials from all founts and nooks : literature, epigraphy, iconology, numismatics, architecture and archaeology. He has also been associated with field surveys and excavations, particularly in Maraguda and Podagoda sites. He has drawn upon extensively from the unpublished report on Maraguda excavation prepared by late Prof. Nabin Kumar Sahu.

There is divergence of views amongst the historians regarding the location of Kosala, Nisadha and Kantara. One school opines that the tracts of Mahakosala and Mahakantra were carved out of the matrix kingdom of Vidarbha. Another propounds that Dakshina Kosala was trifurcated into Kosala, Kantara and Korala. Dr. Patel adopts the following stance : (1) Vidarbha (Berar-Nagpur region), Kosala (Bilaspur-Raipur-Sambalpur region) and Kantara were three separate and adjacent kingdoms, (2) Nisadha and Kantara are one and the same, (3) Kantara lay in between Kosala and Vidarbha, comprising the tracts presently known as the districts of Bastar, Koraput and Kalahandi, and (4) Kantara was ruled by the Nala dynasty, founded by Sisuka (290-300 A.D.).

An attempt has been made in this treatise to present a cogent historical narration of the Nala dynasty, from the last

part of Third century A.D. to Tenth century A.D., with a gap of 160 years (740-900 A.D.). Salient features of the administrative pattern, socio-cultural scenario, religious traits and aspects of art and architecture have also been delineated.

It is indeed a pity that the variegated and epochal annals of Kantara and Kosala kingdoms have, till recent times, been sidelined in general historical studies of the Central-Eastern India, i.e., Orissa-Madhya Pradesh tracts. With progressive revelations of fresh evidence and generation of the awareness that the history of a region has to be studied in a holistic manner, I am sure that aspects of the Kantara and Kosala domains would soon form part of the mainstream-study of Orissan history in particular. Dr. Chandra Bhanu Patel's scholarly work, with its wide range, deep comprehension and objective analysis, is a major attempt in that direction.

Kartik Purnima, 1989
Commissioner's Bungalow,
Sambalpur-768001, Orissa.

Rajendra Kishore Panda

FOREWORD

To reconstruct the history of the Nalas and the cultural ramification of their age is a long felt desideratum. Dipping into the vast spectrum of space and time, the book propends a comprehensive and exhaustive history and culture of Orissa and Madhya Pradesh, embedded in the upper reaches of Mahanadi valley, in the wider hilly hinter region of central eastern India from the 3rd century A.D. to 10th century A.D. under the rule of the illustrious Nala dynasty (with their capital at Puskari) and thereby fills up a major hiatus in the history of Orissa in particular and that of India in general. Based mainly on a series of archaeological serendipities and surveys, the study is unique in its propension with altogether a new orientation in historiography and approach of a hitherto lesser known but exceptionally significant dynastic rule.

Situated at the historical and cultural crossroads of Orissa, Magadha, Madhya Pradesh and South India, the ancient Nisadha country, the original homeland of the Nalas, is a land of absorbing interest and importance. Emerging from an autochthonous non-Aryan tribe, the Nalas provide an excellent example of the process of early State formation and present an exuberant epoch of efflorescent cultural culmination.

Whereas earlier historical researches on the history of ancient and medieval Orissa are mostly confined to coastal Orissa, it is gratifying to find the present treatise emphasizing the significance of an ancient dynasty that flourished beyond the geographical mainstream of Indian history. The book also reveals in a lucid style how the Nala dynasty spread its political control and cultural influence from a rather small homeland to a farflung territorial domain maintaining its suzerainty for several centuries in the political history of central and eastern India.

The discussion on emergence of cultural diffusion from the Nisadha country of the Nalas to the greater Vindhyan region is

another hallmark of the book. The complex ancient geographical frontiers of Dakshina Kosala, Kantara and Nisadha etc. alongwith the capital city of Kosala as described by Yuan Chwang have been aptly identified and dealt with. The value of Dr. C. B. Patel's work is greatly enhanced through his keen archaeological knowledge and the reference to some of the rare and unpublished excavation reports.

Like the Gupta age, the Nala period witnessed the outburst of great religious activities. Saivism, Vaisnavism and Saktism, the great trio of Brahmanical system, greatly thrived and flourished creating the hollowed aura of a number of *tirthas* in the kingdom. Interestingly, various ideas, ideation and thoughts of the religious movements had their obvert reflection and echo in the tectonic and plastic expressions. The contrasting phenomenon of rare epigraphic and numismatic evidence and the resplendent presence of the panoramic phalanx of Sakta devoties, diverse and numerous, of the tantric pantheon, subsequently found adorning the niches and facades of temples in the slender forms of *alasakanyas* and *apsaras* and flying faries, replete with all conceivable seductive and sensuous posture, rendering the whole artistic composition into an amatory world of immanent Sakti, is a remarkable aspect of the book. In my opinion, the book singularly stands as a rare piece of research work and will certainly cater to the need of scholars and students of history.

Dr. H. C. Das

PREFACE

The book, originally part of my doctoral dissertation, embodies the result of my studies and researches on the history and culture of Orissa and Madhya Pradesh in central eastern India under the rule of the Nala dynasty. I was inspired to take up the project by my adorable preceptor Late Dr. N. K. Sahu, renowned professor of Ancient Indian History and Culture and retired Vice-Chancellor of Sambalpur University. With profound remorse, I record here my deep sense of debt to him who unfortunately passed away before its completion. I am equally beholden to Dr. H. C. Das, a distinguished Indologist of international repute under whose scholarly guidance and affectionate care I could complete the book.

I am very much thankful to Dr. H. L. Sukla, Sri B. C. Jain, Dr. J. K. Sahu, Sri B. B. Barik, Sri S. S. Panda, Sri D.K. Barik, Dr. R. C. Patra, Sri G. Bariha, Sri Fanindra Patel, and to Sri D. R. Pradhan for their advice and assistance. I am specially indebted to Sri P. K. Ray, Chief of Orissa State Archaeology, Sri S. M. Routray and Dr. Arjun Josi for their constant scholarly encouragement. I also express my gratitude to those scholars whose pioneering works I have referred to, and to those people whose help I have received in course of the field explorations over the interior and inaccessible tracts of the ancient Nala kingdom. I am greatly grateful to Dr. H. Kulke and Dr. N. N. Bhattacharya, the eminent examiners of the original thesis for their valuable comments and suggestions for the publication of the book.

I am extremely delighted to record here my sincere gratitude to Sri Rajendra Kisore Panda, adept administrator, Poet and scholar of potent world. Prominence for his sagacious and thought provoking prologue and intense intellectual interest in the publication of the book. I am highly thankful to Sri S. K.,

Bhattacharyya, Proprietor, Punthi Pustak for his special interest in the early publication of the book. Lastly I am greatly thankful to my wife Menaka for her understanding and encouragement.

Sambalpur

Chandra Bhanu Patel

Dated. 1. 1. 1990

ABBREVIATIONS

<i>ASIR (AS R)</i>	Archaeological Survey of India Report
<i>ASWI</i>	Archaeological Survey of Western India
<i>CR</i>	Calcutta Review
<i>CII</i>	Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum
<i>EI</i>	Epigraphia Indica
<i>HAS</i>	Hyderabad Archaeological Series
<i>IA</i>	Indian Antiquary
<i>IMP</i>	Inscriptions of Madras Presidency
<i>IHQ</i>	Indian Historical Quarterly
<i>JAHR</i>	Journal of Andhra Historical Research Society
<i>JAS</i>	Journal of Asiatic Society
<i>JASB</i>	Journal of Asiatic Society of Bengal
<i>JBBRAS</i>	Journal of Bombay Branch of Royal Asiatic Society
<i>JBORS</i>	Journal of Bihar Orissa Research Society
<i>JBR</i>	Journal of Bihar Research Society
<i>JKHR</i>	Journal of Kalinga Historical Research Society
<i>JNSI</i>	Journal of Numismatic Society of India
<i>JRASB</i>	Journal of Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal
<i>MM</i>	Madras Manual
<i>MASI</i>	Memoirs of Archaeological Survey of India
<i>OHRJ</i>	Orissa Historical Research Journal
<i>PP</i>	Prachya Pratibha.

TRANSLITERATION TABLE

VOWELS : a, ā, i, ī, u, ū, r, e, ai, c, au

CONSONANTS : k, kh, g, gh, ṅ (gutturals)
ch, chh, j, jh, ñ (palatals)
ṭ, ṭh, ḍ, ḍh, ṇ (cerebrals)
t, th, d, dh, n (dentals)
p, ph, b, bh, m (labials)

SEMI-VOWELS : y, r, l, v, (h, ḷ)

SIBILANTS : ś, ṣ, s

ANUSVARA : ṁ

VISARGA : ḥ

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INTRODUCTION

Much has been written on various dynasties of Orissa that ruled in smaller principalities or in bigger kingdoms anterior and posterior to the Nalas but due attention has not been given to the Nalas who ruled over the present Bastar-Koraput-Kalahandi region¹ either due to apathy or paucity of systematic data. While surveying the Poḍāgoḍa and Mārāguḍā areas, at times the centres of political and cultural activities of the Nalas, and taking part in the excavation programme undertaken by my Professor late Dr. N. K. Sahu (who was in charge of excavation of the Mārāguḍa site), I earnestly felt the necessity of studying the Nalas whose contribution to the history and culture of Orissa was no less significant than others and without taking them into account the history of Orissa cannot be complete in any respect. Professor Sahu, whom I all along accompanied in survey, explorations and excavations of the sites sincerely suggested me to take up the study in exploitation of the vast mass of materials retrieved therein.

It may be mentioned here that the discovery of the Poḍāgaḍa charter of king Skandavarman and the Eḍengā gold coin hoard of Varāharāja, Bhavadaṭṭa and Arthapatirāja in the early part of the 20th century drew the attention of eminent scholars like V. V. Mirashi², K. V. Rao³, G. Ramadas⁴, D. C. Sircar⁵, S. N. Rajguru⁶ and N. K. Sahu⁷ who on the hand, clearly

1. Ancient Niṣadha and Kāntāra region.
2. *E.I.* Vol. XXVI, pp. 49-50.
J.N.S.I., No. I, pp. 29-35.
3. Rao, *Early Dynasties of Andhradesa*, pp. 657-666.
4. *J.B.R.S.*, Vol. XXXIV, pp. 33-42.
Ibid., Vol. XXXIII, Pts. 1-2, pp. 7-19.
5. *E.I.*, Vol. XXIX, Nos. 2-3, pp. 54-65.
Sircar, *Classical Age*, Vol. III, pp. 188-190.
6. *O.H.R.J.*, Vol. VI, Pts. 2-3, pp. 97-102.
Rajguru, *Inscriptions of Orissa*. Vol. I, Pt. 2. pp. 81-112.
7. *O.H.R.J.* Vol. XI, pp. 95-102.
Sahu, *Utkal University History of Orissa*, Vol. II, pp. 506-519.

identified the royal dynasty of the Nalas in a chronological sequence and on the other, attempted to delineate the geographical limits of their kingdom. These learned scholars made sincere endeavour to elicit a comprehensive history of the dynasty but could not, perhaps due to lack of systematic materials. On the basis of earlier works H. L. Sukla⁸ and D. K. Ganguli⁹ further attempted to present a more comprehensive history of the dynasty, but they almost harped on the same cord without aiding much to our knowledge.

Of late the new source materials brought to light through survey, exploration and excavation further attracted me to go deep into the matter touching upon the history and culture of the Nalas in a broader perspective. In this work I have made an attempt to present a systematic dynastic history of the Nalas and the cultural efflorescence of their age through meticulous study and analysis of the published and new materials such as literary, epigraphic, numismatic and archaeological.

In most of the previous attempts, primarily an outline of the political history of the Nalas has been presented. It may be mentioned here that history is not merely the study of kings and conquerors, their queens, prelates and potentates, but also it records the social, economic and cultural condition of the period along with the contributions of the monarchs. Taking into account the wider historical perspective I have attempted to study the Nala dynasty highlighting their culture. Cultural manifestations transcend geographical barriers and frontiers and so the culture complex of the Nala age has been studied in a broader perspective of space and time stretching over the entire traditional South Kośala, Kāntāra and Niṣadha regions (present Chhattisgarh area of M.P. and western Orissa) in a time bracket ranging from 4th century A.D. down to the 10th century A.D.

8. Sukla, *Prachina Bastar*, pp. 29-176.

9. Ganguli, *Historical Geography and Dynastic History of Orissa*, pp. 252-263, 270-271.

The available source materials, original as well as secondary, have been taken into account, processed and analysed. Since there are limitations and inconsistencies in written evidences, extensive explorations and field study have been made over the known Nala sites and other neighbouring early cultural centres for presenting a more comprehensive history and culture of the Nalas. The few inscriptional and numismatic evidences which constitute the original basis of their history have been complemented by an elaborate study of the relevant records of other neighbouring contemporary dynasties ruling around different parts of traditional south Kośala region. My own archaeological explorations and survey of Nala sites and the excavation reports on a few other sites formed the basis of the present dissertation.

Literary works have further supplemented in elucidating the history of the dynasty. The *Purāṇas* shed much light on the dynastic history, the ancient territorial divisions and the religious system of this age while the foreign accounts delineate many facets of social life. The secondary sources help in forming a still better picture on certain darker aspects of past life. Thus almost all the available source materials have been virtually exploited to prepare the treatise.

My study is based on scientific analysis of the various facts as gleaned from the varied enumerated source materials. The information noticed in epigraphs and coins have been compared, contrasted and corroborated with other allied testimonials. In order to present a clear picture of the history of the Nalas, the history and culture of other contemporary dynasties such as the Vākāṭakas, the Meghas, the Śarabhapuriyās, the Mātharas, the Paṇḍuvamśis, the Parvatadvārakas and the Rājarsīkulatulya have also been taken into account.

Findings of explorations and excavations furnish a key to the cultural and religious efflorescence of the Nala age. Sculptural art and architectural pieces of the epoch have been studied at large to highlight the artistic heritage and religious condition.

of the age. I may confess that despite these source materials certain lapses in analysis of the history and culture of the Nalas cannot be ruled out.

However, I have tried my best to present a connected and comprehensive history of the family from the last part of the 3rd century A.D. down to 10th century A.D. (with a gap of about 100 years between 740 to 900 A.D.). I have also recognised the founder of the dynasty and attempted to identify the original homeland and the early capital of the Nalas. Above all our findings have been properly corroborated and culled with a balanced synthesis of literary and archaeological evidence.

In the 1st Chapter the various source materials that form the basis of my research work have been systematically enumerated. Chapter two deals with the political background of North India, Deccan, Kaliṅga and South Kośala regions on the eve of the rise of the Nalas. The perplexing problem of the origin and the original homeland of the Nalas have been discussed in the 3rd Chapter. I have further attempted here to define the frontiers of the traditional South Kośala in the upper course of the Mahanadi valley (including its tributaries) and have identified Niṣadha country (a geographical division of South Kośala) and synchronised the same with Kāntāra.

The political history of the Nalas has been presented in 4th Chapter. The establishment of the dynasty has been attributed to the last quarter of the 3rd century A.D. (contemporary to the Vākaṭakas). The 'hiatus' between the early Nalas and the later Nalas has been reduced by incorporating the Rājim branch of the Nalas with the main line in a unbroken continuity upto 740 A.D. The line beginning with Bhīmasenadeva who flourished in the 10th century A.D. has been logically designated as the 'later Nalas' since a gap of 160 years could not be bridged. I have also presented in this chapter an account of South Kośala as described by Hiuen Tsang who in my opinion visited and described the Kingdom of the Nalas. Fifth chapter is

confined to an elucidation of the Nala administrative systems in its manifold aspects such as, state organisations, administrative divisions, feudalism etc. and an account of important cities and towns of the Kingdom.

In the 6th Chapter I have given a picture of the society in all its important aspects together with a glimpse of the economic condition of the realm. The indelible impresses and imprints of the cultural exuberance of the Nala age have been amply reflected in this chapter as well. Chapter seven deals with the various religious movements—Śaivism, Vaiṣṇavism and Śaktism the great trio of Brāhmaṇism which equally flourished under the patronage of the eclectic Nalas and a number of *tīrthas* developed in their dominion diffusing culture complex far and near. In the last Chapter I have attempted to identify a few art centres and depicted the artistic heritage of the Nala kingdom with illustrations.

I may mention here that my discussion of the dynastic history of the illustrious Nalas and the cultural ramifications of their age is though comprehensive may not be construed to be conclusive, since the sources are distorted, inadequate, controversial and at times conflicting. I have modestly and humbly attempted, to the best of my ability, to present a comprehensive and connected history and culture of the Nalas.

I

Sources

Similar to many other ruling dynasties of India, the source materials in respect of the history of the Nalas are inadequate, scanty and distorted. However, whatever source data—epigraphic, numismatic, literary and archaeological retrieved so far, have been utilised in reconstructing the dynastic history of the Nalas and in highlighting their culture in relation to the contemporary neighbouring ruling dynasties. The authentic sources that have been tapped in preparation of the monograph are appended below.

(A) EPIGRAPHIC

Epigraphs are the most scientific sources of information about the past history. At present, we have three copper plate grants and two stone inscriptions of the Nalas, which throw ample light on their history and culture.

Rithapur Copper Plate Grant of Bhavadattavarman

The earliest copper plate grant of this dynasty known so far is the Rithapur Charter of Bhavaṭṭavarman. Bhavaṭṭavarman of this epigraph is Bhavadaṭṭa of the Eḍengā gold coin hoard. Perhaps by omission the King's name had been written here as Bhavaṭṭavarman. The grant was discovered at Rithapur (Ridhapur) in the Morsi Taluq of Amarāvati district of Maha-

rastra and has been edited by Y. R. Gupte¹. It consists of 3 plates measuring 7 3/16" long, 3 6/18" to 3 10/18" board, 1/10" thick and weighs 87 3/4 tolas. The seal of the grant is missing. The upper portion of the 1st plate is blank. The letters have been well engraved and are in a good state of preservation. The script used in the box-headed Brāhmi of central Indian type of about 5th century A.D. We notice in it some epigraphical and palaeographical peculiarities as well. The language is Sanskrit and the composition is both in prose and verse.

The grant has been issued by Mahārāja Bhavaṭṭavarman from Nandivardhan in his 11th regnal year. It records the grant of the village 'Kadambagiri' to Mātrādhyāryya and his eight sons. Kadambagiri has been identified with the present village Kalamba, of Amarāvati district in Maharashtra by Gupte. There is controversy about the identification of Nandivardhan. Hiralal² identified Nagardham near Nagpur while N. K. Sahu³ identified Nandapur, 34 miles away of Nagpur as Nandivardhan of the record. The grant has been made at the oral command of king Bhavaṭṭavarman at Prayāg, while he was on pilgrimage and has been subsequently issued by his successor Arthapati Bhaṭṭāraka.

Keśaribedā grant of Mahārāja Arthapati Bhaṭṭāraka

A set of three copper plates was discovered in 1944 at Keśaribedā in Umarkot Tahasil of Koraput district. The find-spot of the grant is full of ancient ruins. The plates are found strung to a copper ring. The circumference and diameter of the ring as described by G. Ramdas⁴ are 7.4" and 2'. The plates measure 7.5" long and 1.5" wide. The corners have been trimmed and rounded off. The plates with the ring weigh

1. *E.I.*, Vol. XIX, pp. 100-104.

2. Hiralal, *A New History of Indian People*, Vol. VI, p. 114.

3. N. K. Sahu, *Utkal University History of Orisa*, Vol. I, p. 508.

4. *J.B.R.S.*, Vol. XXXIII, pt. I-II, pp. 33-42, Also see, *E.I.*, Vol. XXVIII, p. 12.

34.75 tolas and the ring alone weighs 6.75 tolas. First side of the 1st plate is blank, the 2nd and 3rd are inscribed on both sides and the set contains 14 lines of inscription.

The letters used are of scooped out variety of the box-headed character of central Indian script prevalent in 5th/6th century A.D. The language of the charter is Sanskrit and has been composed both in verse and prose diction.

This grant records the donation of the village 'Keselaka' to three Brāhmins of *Kautsasa Gotra* by Mahārāja Bhaṭṭāraka in his 7th regnal year, on new moon day of *Mārgasira*. The officer executing the grant is Chaulla.

Keselaka *Grāma* of the inscription has been identified with present Keśaribedā village, the find spot of the grant. The place of issue of the charter is Puskari which has been identified with present Poḍāgaḍa (revenue village Bhandāriguḍa) in Dabugaon Tahasil of Koraput district.

Pāṇḍīāpathar Copper Plate Charter of Mahārājādhirāja Bhīmasena

Sometime in 1955, a set of three copper plates were discovered at Pāṇḍīāpathar, a small village about six miles to the north-east of Aska in Ganjam district. Each plate measures 7.8×3.8" and they are strung together by a round ring with a seal measuring 1.2" on it. The emblem is indistinct. S. N. Rajguru⁵ and D. C. Sirkar⁶ have edited the charter.

The grant has been issued by Mahārāja Bhīmasena in Saṁvat 189 which Rajguru⁷ takes as Bhauma Saṁvat and assigns it to 10th century A.D. In the charter the king calls himself as an ornament of the 'Nalodbhava family'. It has been issued from Bhīmapura identified with the present Bhīmanagar⁸. The territory over which he ruled was known as Kṣiṇḍīrasringa

5. *O.H.R.J.*, Vol. VI, pts. II-III, pp. 97-102,

6. *E.I.*, Vol. XXXIV, pp. 233-238.

7. *O.H.R.J.*, *Ibid.*

8. *Ibid.*

Maṇḍala. The charter records the donation of Kurmatāla village to Sadbhaṭṭa and Yajñi Bhaṭṭa Prakāṭṭama.

Poḍāgaḍa Stone Inscription of Skandavarman

The stone inscription was discovered in 1922 by G. Venkoba Rao and C. R. Krishnamacharlu of Southern Archaeological circle, Madras. Krishnamacharlu⁹ later on edited the inscription. It is still lying on a hill at Poḍāgaḍa¹⁰ in Dabugaon Tahasil of Koraput district and it contains 12 or 13 verses written in Sanskrit.

The inscription speaks of king Skandavarman, son of Bhavadatṭa of the Nala family, who repopulated the deserted town Puṣkari and made the gift of a holding and some money in the shape of 'Bhūridakṣiṇā' for feeding Brāhmins and the destitutes. It also describes the establishment of the foot print (*Pādamula*) of Viṣṇu, for which the king made the grant. It was made in his 12th regnal year on the 27th day of Baiśākha. The writer of the record was Jantura Dāsa son of Chauli. The characters of the epigraph belong to the Southern type of alphabet and according to Krishnamacharlu¹¹ the editor of the epigraph, it belongs to 5th-6th century A.D. Puṣkari is identified with modern Poḍāgaḍa¹², which is full of antiquarian remains and ruins.

Rājim Stone Inscription of Vilāsatuṅga :

This epigraph written in Sanskrit verses contains 29 lines and is edited by V. V. Mirashi¹³. Unfortunately, not a single line is intact.

It is found on the left side of the *Maṇḍapa* of the Rājivalochan temple at Rājim in Raipur district of M.P. Here we find

9. *E.I.*, Vol. XXIV, pp. 153-157.

10. Revenue village Bhaṇḍāriguḍā.

11. *Ibid.*

12. N. K. Sahu, *Op.Cit.*, p. 507.

13. *E.I.*, Vol. XXVI, pp. 49-58.

names of three Nala rulers, Prithvirāja, Viruparāja and Vilāsa-tuṅga. Cunningham¹⁴ assigns it to 8th/9th century A.D. while D. R. Bhandarkar¹⁵ assigns it to the middle of the 8th century A.D. According to Mirashi¹⁶ the inscription belongs to 700 A.D.

OTHER INSCRIPTIONS OF NALA AGE

Apart from the Nala inscriptions we find a number of other epigraphs which mention and refer to Nala rulers. They are also very important sources of the history of the rise and fall of the Nalas.

I. Allahabad pillar inscription of Samudragupta

We get a vivid account of Samudragupta's southern expedition from the *Allahabad pillar inscription*. There is reference to Mahendra of Kosala and Vyāghrarāja of Kāntāra. Nalas were ruling over parts of Kosala and Kāntāra region since the close of the 3rd century A.D. I am of the opinion that Vyāghrarāja of Kāntāra belonged to the Nala dynasty (See Chapters II and III).

II. Copper plate grant of Prabhāvatī Guptā

From the Poona Copper Plate Grant of Prabhāvatī Guptā, wife of Vākāṭaka king Rudrasena, and daughter of Chandragupta Vikramāditya, we know about Nandivardhana¹⁷, which also finds mention in the Rithapur inscription of Bhavadatta-varman. Both the grants were found together as well.

III. Aihole inscription of Pulakeśin II

From this inscription¹⁸, we know that Kirtivarman, son of

14. *A.S.I.R.*, Vol. XVII, p. 7.

15. *J.R.A.S.W.*, 1903-4, p. 48.

16. *E.I.*, *Ibid.*

17. Vasudev Upadhyaya, *Gupta Sāmrajya kā Itihas*, p. 208.

18. *E.I.*, Vol. VI, p. 1.

Pulakeśin II, was victorious over Nalas, Mauryas and Kādam-bas. Kirtivarman was ruling from 566-590 A.D.

IV. Kurnool grant of Vikramāditya I

In this grant, we find reference to 'Nalavādiviṣaya', Vikramāditya¹⁹ was ruling about 658 A.D. The reference to Nalavādiviṣaya in his grant indicates that Nalas have gone as far as Tuṅgabhadra valley.

V. Udayendram grant of Pallavamalla Nandivardhan

Here we find reference to the Asvamedha sacrifice of one Niṣādhapati Prithivīyāghra²⁰, who in all probability was a Nala ruler.

The inscriptions contain very many information on various aspects of Nala rule and regime. From the Poḍāgaḍa stone inscription we get an insight into the political, social and religious condition of the state. The evidence obtained from these records is very well corroborated by archaeological, literary and other evidences. Village administration, revenue system, religious policy and social and economic life of the state are amply reflected in the epigraphs. We also get a clear picture of genealogy and chronology of the Nalas by scrutinising the grants.

(B) NUMISMATIC

Coins constitute another important and scientific source of information of the past history. Four coin hoards of the Nalas have been discovered so far, which through light on their history and culture.

Eḍengā Gold Coin Hoard

In 1939, a hoard of 32 gold coins of the Nala rulers was discovered from the village Eḍengā of Koḍegāon²¹ Tahasil of

19. *J.B.Br.R.A.S.*, Vol. II, pt. II, pp. 225-255.

20. *I.A.*, Vol. VIII, p. 273.

21. Kondegaon is 81° 39'E and 19° 36'N.

Bastar district, Madhyapradesh. Some coins were reported to have been melted away before the state official could collect them. By the good office of E. C. Hyde, I.C.S., Administrator of Bastar State, the remaining thirty-two coins were recovered and V. V. Mirashi²² has edited them. The coins are in a perfect state of preservation. They are round and made of thin sheet of gold. They are single die coins of repousee type, with the design and the legend embossed in relief on the obverse and the reverse is blank. Mirashi has divided them into two classes according to their size. Bigger coins numbering ten measure from 20 to 21 mm. in diameter and weigh from 19.7 to 24.6 grams each. The smaller ones numbering twenty-two are about 15 mm. in diameter and weigh about 7.5 grams each. The obverse is divided into two parts by horizontal lines, one to three in number. In the upper half, a humped bull (*Nandi*) and the crescent are seen. In the lower half, we find the legend of the issuer. The figure of the bull is seen beautifully executed on the coins of Bhavadaṭṭavarman.²³

Coins of Śrīvarāha (Varāharāja)

Of the thirty-two coins, twenty-nine coins belong to Varāharāja. From the device and legend, they are further classified by Mirashi. Of the 1st group of six larger coins, the obverse contains a circle of dots along the edge with humped bull facing left towards the crescent. Below the horizontal line, the legend 'Śrī-Varāharāja' is inscribed in the box-headed character of 5th century A.D. In the other type, inside a circle of dots a couchant bull faces right with the crescent above its back. Below, the legend reads 'Śrīvarāha'.

Coin of Bhavadattarāja

One coin of larger variety contains the legened 'Bhavadaṭṭarājasya' in box-headed character. Other things are as above.

22. *J.N.S.I.*, Vol. I, pp. 29-35.

23. *Ibid.*

Coins of Arthapati

This hoard contains two coins of two varieties in larger size of the king Arthapati. On the obverse, inside a circle of dots along the edge, a couchant humped bull faces right with the crescent in front, below is the legend 'Śrī Arthapatirājasya' in box-headed character. In the other variety the crescent is behind the bull.

According to Mirashi²⁴ the coins of 'Varāha' appear to be the earliest and that of Arthapati is the latest. He also doubts if these coins were meant for circulation and they may be token plaques.

From the grants we know about Shavadaṭṭa and his son Arthapati, who has also issued the Keśaribedā grant. They belong to Nala dynasty.

The name of Bhavadaṭṭa is also found in the rock inscription of Skandavarman, who is apparently his second son. However, as yet we do not find the name of 'Varāha' in epigraphic records. Mirashi²⁵ and Sahu²⁶ accept him as a Nala ruler on the evidence of palaeography, he seems to be the predecessor of Bhavadaṭṭa.

Kuliā Hoard of Gold Coins

A hoard of thirty gold coins was discovered at the village of Kuliā in Durg district of M.P. in 1977. It contains twenty-five coins of 'Mahendrāditya' and five coins of the Nala rulers. By the effort of the Collector, Durg, they were collected and lodged in M.G.R. Museum, Raipur and B. C. Jain²⁷ and L. S. Nigam²⁸ have published them.

Of the five Nala coins, two belong to Bhavadaṭṭa and one to Arthapati, who are known to us from the Edenga hoard and

24. *Ibid.*

25. *Ibid.*

26. Sahu, *Op.Cit.*, pp. 506-19.

27. *J.N.S.I*, Vol. XL, Parts I-II, pp. 108-110.

28. *Prachya Pratibha*, Vol. V, No. 1, pp. 69-74.

the epigraphs. The rest two coins of this hoard introduce two new rulers 'Śrī Nandanarāja' and 'Stambha' who are identified as Nala rulers by Jain²⁹ and Nigam³⁰. We also find reference to one 'Śrī Nanda' in the Palai and Gandiberh hoards³¹ of copper coins, whom we are inclined to identify with 'Śrī Nandanarāja' of this gold coin hoard. The coins are in excellent state of preservation and are struck repousee having blank reverse.

Coins of Bhavadatta (Two coins)

The coins are round in shape, diameter being 21 mm. and weigh 1.775 gm. They are made of gold and are divided into two parts by horizontal lines. On the obverse, inside a circle of dots, on the upper half, a couchant bull is facing right with the crescent behind it. In the lower half, there is the legend 'Śrī Bhavadattarājasya' in the box-headed character of Brāhmi. The reverse is blank.

Coin of Arthapati

Obverse same as above and the legend reads 'Śrī Arthapati-rājasya' weight—1.565 gm. Diameter 20 mm.

Coin of Nandanarāja

Metal—Gold

Diameter—20 mm.

Weight—1.310 gm.

As usual, the obverse is divided into two parts by horizontal lines. A circle of dots runs along the edge. In the upper half, a couchant humped bull faces left with six dots behind it. In front of the bull, crescent is shown. In the lower half the legend in box-headed character reads 'Śrī Nandanarāja'.

29. *Ibid.*

30. *Ibid.*

31. *O.H.R.J.*, Vol. XXIX, Nos. II-III, pp. 54-55.

Coin of Stambha

Metal—Gold

Diameter—16 mm.

Weight—0.720 gm.

Obverse as above. In front of the bull a symbol is found and the legend reads 'Stambha' in the box-headed character of Brāhmi.

For the 1st time, Nandanarāja and Stambha are known from these gold coins and they belong to the Nala dynasty³². They may be assigned to the period after Skandavarman.

Gandibedā Hoard of Copper Coins

In 1953, a hoard of 147 copper coins was discovered by S. N. Rajguru³³ from the village Gandibedā of Balasore district, Orissa. Rajguru edited the coins. Subsequently S. Tripathy³⁴ has published a comprehensive note on the coins in the same journal. These coins are attributed to one 'Śrī Nanda' whom we believe to be a Nala ruler and he is the person who issued the Kulia gold coin with the legend 'Śrī Nandanarāja'.

The coins are 147 in number. According to Rajguru³⁵, the coins vary in size from 0.50 to 0.75 mm. and in weight from 19 gm. to 25 gm. They are all of copper. The obverse contains a couchant bull and in the reverse the legend inscribed is 'Śrī Nanda' in box-headed character of the central Indian variety prevalent between 5th to 7th century A.D. in ancient South Kośala region. Rajguru³⁶ has attempted to identify Śrī Nanda of this hoard with 'Nandaprabhañjanavarman' of Māthara dynasty while N. K. Sahu³⁷ with a Māna ruler. S.

32. *Prachya Pratibha*, *Ibid.*

33. *O.H.R.J.*, Vol. V, Nos. 3-4, pp. 157-159.

34. *Ibid.*, Vol. XXIX, Nos. 2-3, pp. 54-55.

35. *O.H.R.J.*, Vol. V, Nos. 3-4, pp. 157-159.

36. *Ibid.*

37. Sahu, *Op Cit.*, pp. 519-521.

Tripathy³⁸ is inclined to identify 'Śrī Nanda' as a Nala ruler, which appears to be plausible.

Palāi Copper Coin Hoard

S. Tripathy³⁹ has reported the discovery and collection of forty-one copper coins of the Gandibeda type by the Orissa State Museum in 1982, from a resident of village Palāi near Balichandrapur in Cuttack district. The coins are in a bad state of preservation. They are very small measuring about 1 cm. and weigh 0.50 gm. and resemble very much to the Gaṅga fanam. The obverse contains a couchant bull, facing left, within a circle of rounded flan. A straight line runs below it and the reverse contains the legend 'Śrī Nanda' in box-headed character of 5th/6th century A.D. So far the device and script are concerned, there is much similarity between the copper coins of 'Śrī Nanda' and gold coins of 'Śrīnandanaraja' of the Kulia hoard, and so we may attribute the issue of these coins to the one and the same person.

Silver coins

As yet, no silver coins of the Nala rulers have been noticed. However, we find mention to 'Rupyaphalāni'⁴⁰ which means silver coin in the grant of Bhīmasena. From this we presume that silver coins were in use and circulation at least at the time of Nala ruler Bhīmasenadeva⁴¹.

(C) LITERARY

In various literary work we find reference, to the 'Epic Nala of Niṣadha' from whom the historical Nala rulers claim their descent. In fact, the episode of Nala finds frequent mention in

38. *O.H.R.J.*, Vol. XXIX, Nos. 2-3, pp. 54-65.

39. *Ibid.*

40. *E.I.*, XXXIV, pp. 233-38.

41. Sukla, *Prāchīna Bastar*, pp. 36-40.

all important literature of India like the *Mahābhārata* and the *Rāmāyaṇa* etc. Similarly, Niṣādha, the original homeland of Nala is also frequently mentioned, over which the historical Nalas had their sway. Study of 'Nala Damayantī' episode in ancient literature thus, helps us in determining the origin of the Nalas and the location of their original homeland.

Early Literature

We come across the earliest accounts of south Kośala and Niṣādha regions in the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*⁴². According to S. N. Pradhan south Kośala, Chedi, Dasārṇa, Niṣādha and Vidarbha situated at the foot of the Vindhya were early settlements⁴³ and Indrasenā, the wife of Mudgala, mentioned in the *Rigveda* was the daughter of Nala and Damayantī as attested by the *Mahābhārata* and mentioned in the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*. This source apparently reveals that Nala was the ruler of ancient south Kośala and Niṣādha regions.

Mahābhārata

In the *Mahābhārata*⁴⁴ we get graphic account of epic Nala and south Kośala. We also know that Nala was the son of Virasena of Niṣādha. He was a great and chivalrous Prince, endowed with all the excellent qualities. The gods become envious and he with his wife Damayantī, the daughter of king Bhīmasena of Vidarbha were put to troubles by the gods. After years of tears and toil in hills and dales of the Kośala region, they were reunited after a long painful separation. This story was so popular and appealing that there is a reference to this episode almost in all subsequent important literary works. For our purpose, we get enough materials of the geography of the regions near and south of the Vindhya, where the Nalas ruled.

42. Pradhana, *Chronology of Ancient India*, p. 202.

43. *Ibid.*

44. *Vanaparva*, pp. 50-78.

The distance between places mentioned in the epics even holds good today. According to P. L. Misra⁴⁵ "from Kośala to Vidarbha was eleven hours journey in ancient times, and even today a passenger train takes eleven hours from Raipur to Nagpur i.e., the capital of Kośala and Vidarbha respectively. It is quite possible to traverse the distance by eleven hours by four choicest horses in olden days".

Rāmāyaṇa

In this epic we find reference to south Kośala frequently. In the *Sundarā Kāṇḍa*⁴⁶, Sītā compares the sanctity of her chastity with that of Damayantī.

Purāṇas

In the Purāṇas like *Vāyu*, *Bramāṇḍa*, *Matsya*, *Padma*, *Hari-vamśa* and *Liṅga* we find the interesting Nala episode in different colours⁴⁷. The various places of south Kośala also find frequent mention in these works. In the *Vāyu* and *Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇas*, it is mentioned that "all the kings of Niśādha, born in the family of Nala, valiant and very powerful, will exist till the termination of Manus".⁴⁸ Pargiter assigns the Nalas to the 3rd century A.D.⁴⁹.

Aṣṭādhyāi of Paṇini

Aṣṭādhyāi of Paṇini is an important early historical work. In it, there is mention of Niśadhadesa as an adjacent country of Vidarbha⁵⁰. Sukla is of opinion that Nad, Nadval, Nadva and Nadkia mentioned in the same work are identical with the Nad-Naiśādha of the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*.⁵¹

45. Misra, *Political history of Chhatisgarh*, p. 16.

46. Qtd. Sukla in *Parchina Bastar*, p. 32.

47. *Ibid.*

48. Pargiter, *The Purana Text of the Dynasties of Kali Age*, p. 73.

49. *Ibid.*

50. Sukla, *Op.Cit.*, p. 33.

51. *Ibid.*

In the great Sanskrit Kāvya of Śrīharṣa's "Naiṣadhiya Charita", "Nalachampū" of Trivikrambhāṭṭa, Bāṇa's "Kādambarī" and Somadeva's "Kathāsaritasāgara" and in many other later works we find reference to the Nala episode. South Kośala is also mentioned in the works of Kālidāsa. In the Buddhist *Upādāna* there is a mention of Maikāl hills and Amar-kāṇṭaka which are in south Kośala⁵². King Harṣa in his 'Ratnāvalī' has noted that king of Kośala was surrounded by Vindhya mountain.

The famous Chinese traveller Hiuen Tsang has described south Kośala in his accounts⁵³. He narrates that "from Kaliṅga, he went by hills and woods for above 1800 li to Kośala. This country more than 6000 li in circuit was surrounded by mountain and was a succession of woods and marshes... The soil of the country was rich and fertile, the towns and villages were close together". This description very much refers to the Nala territory in the north-west of Kośala, i.e., modern Koraput, Kalahandi and Bastar region. Cunningham⁵⁴ identifies the Vidarbha or Berar region as south Kośala of the pilgrim's accounts. We thus, get vivid account of south Kośala in these works, over which the Nalas were having their sway at different points of time.

Epic Nala in Inscriptions

Apart from the religious literature, the Nala episode finds mention in some of the historical inscriptions as well. In the Sirpur temple inscription of Somavamśī Queen Vāsata, her chastity has been compared with that of Damayanti⁵⁵. Similarly we find reference to epic Nala in the Jataśingā grant of Somavamśī king Mahāśiva-gupta Yayāti⁵⁶. In the Kānchipuram

52. Misra, *Op.Cit.*, p. 21.

53. Watters, *Book II*, pp. 200-208.

54. Cunningham, *Ancient Geography of India*, p. 520.

55. *E.I.*, Vol. XI, p. 184.

56. *J.B.O.R.S.*, Vol. II, pp. 45-55.

inscription of Achutyarāja⁵⁷ (1531 A.D.) his personality has been compared with Nala, Nābhaga, Nahuṣa and Rāma. “*Nala, Nābhāga-Nahuṣa, Nruga-Rāma...Achyutendra Mahārāja nāmasiṃha Suvartamānaḥ*”.

(D) ARCHAEOLOGICAL

The archaeological materials which have come to our notice speak of the Nalas, their religion, art, architecture, social and economic life and trade and commerce. Find-spot of the Nala relics gives us a fair idea of their territorial limit at different points of time. By a comparative study of the ruins and relics, we know the expansion and contraction of the Nala regime over ancient south Kośala and Kāntāra regions. Up till now scholars have not trodden the path of archaeological source of the Nala age. Particularly, the recent excavation at Mārāguḍā in Nawapara Sub-Division of Kalahandi district, has brought to light startling evidence of a Śaiva-Śākta establishment, unique in the whole of India⁵⁸.

Relics of Koraput District

Koraput and Kalahandi districts of Orissa and Bastar district of M.P. comprised the heart of Nala kingdom and particularly the Umakot region of Koraput district is teeming with ruins and relics ascribable to Nala period. In this part, as we know, two epigraphs have also come to light, and are known to have been issued from Puṣkari i.e., modern Poḍāgaḍa, which was the capital of the Nalas. The vicinity of Poḍāgaḍa is full of ruins, giving the impression of one time busy and prosperous city life in this past. Now it is deserted and forlorn, and almost a forbidden land⁵⁹. Poḍāgaḍa, literally means a burnt fort, and the scattered ruins in the vicinity give the impression to a visitor

57. *E.I.*, Vol. XXXIII, pp. 201-202.

58. Sahu, *Unpublished excavation report of Mārāguḍā valley*.

59. Sahu, *Utkal University History of Orissa*, Vol. I, p. 507.

that the old city had been destroyed at one point of time by the enemies which was later on restored to some extent by Skandavarman as is evident from his Poḍāgaḍa stone inscription⁶⁰.

G. Ramdas, who visited Poḍāgaḍa area during 1948, has given a vivid survey account and has taken back the antiquity of the place to the Epic and Purāṇic age and he has identified Puṣkari with the famous Puṣkara *Tīrtha* of *Mahābhārata*⁶¹. The site of Poḍagaḍa rock inscription is located amidst a formidable hill fort. I visited the site several times and found remains of brick and stone structures, parts of broken pillars, pottery and terracottas and bangles on the hill fort lying scattered here and there. Ramdas also reports the discovery of an ancient stronghold of kings⁶². There are traces of staircase built of stone slabs, leading to the fort from the ground. Traces of the gateway are also seen. I believe the two big stone slabs lying nearby are the parts of original gateway. Ramdas⁶³ is of opinion that the rock with the inscription of Skandavarman was the part of a pillar that supported an arch. The inscription is found half way, i.e., in the middle of the towering hill fort. Another set of staircase, traces of which are even visible today, leads one to the top of the hill, which is a flat surface quite broad. Here we notice pottery, pieces of tile and burnt bricks lying scattered. We also notice here a number of holes on the rock, which were apparently meant for pounding grains.

An iron dagger, kept in a corner and is occasionally worshipped, seems to be of Nala period. From this place, one can have a view of the surroundings, which is full of ancient vestiges. In the north traces of the ruined temple and terracottas and some stone sculptures are found. To the south-west there is a dilapidated Śiva temple, besides two old ponds with a large number of sculptures lying scattered therein. In course of my

60. *Ibid.*

61. *J.B.R.S.*, XXXIII, Nos. I-II, pp. 7-19.

62. *Ibid.*

63. *Ibid.*

survey I have collected pottery, terracottas and stone beads from this site. Two sets of *satī* pillars, one in front of the ruined Śiva temple and the other one 1/2 km. to its north are found. From the style, execution and look, they seem to be quite old and may be suitably ascribed the Nala period. From the Nala records, we know that there was fierce fighting between the Nalas and the Vākāṭakas, and Prithvīsenā, the Vākāṭaka king devastated Puṣkari and perhaps killed Arthapati⁶⁴. Subsequently, Skandavarman restored Puṣkari. Now we have every reason to believe that the memorial or *satī* stones might have been erected to co-memorate some of the fallen heroes of the war. I could not trace out the stone with the impression of the foot-print which Ramdas⁶⁵ reports and believes to be the original foot-print of Viṣṇu installed in the temple as warranted in the inscription of Skandavarman. The Village 'Parvā' near Raighar is reported to be a place of great antiquity containing *Śivaliṅga* and a Bhairava image of Poḍāgaḍa type⁶⁶. Keśari-beḍā, the find-spot of the grant of Arthapati is also full of old vestiges. Ramdas has counted five mounds. But I could see only three mounds at present with brick and pottery remains. There is an old tank nearby. It looks very old and may be ascribed to the Nala period. In the trial trenches of Ramdas we notice the ruins of the structures made of burnt bricks. In one trench Ramdas excavated a standing Viṣṇu image 2' high⁶⁷.

In course of my exploration, I visited a number of sites such as Nandpur, Pāpadāhāṇḍi, Kusumbandh, Jharigāon, Telundā, Banuabandh, Andhi-Bhedā, Hātavarandī, Kumuli, Khursi, Yogidungiri, Taharā, Sarguli, Jāmdarā, Ulmāgaḍa, Dhodṛā, Umargāon, and Tarāgāon, the later being the source of the origin of the river Tel, and found ancient remains. In most

64. Sahu, *Op.Cit.*, p. 51.

65. *J.B.R.S.*, Vol. XXXIII, Nos. I-II, pp. 7-19.

66. *Ibid.*

67. *Ibid.*

of these villages, there are Śiva Temples. Thus almost each and every village of Umarkot region contains ancient vestiges, giving the impression of the growth and development of a flourishing civilisation in this part, in early times. The landscape is very beautiful and fertile and thus, excellently suitable for the rise of a rich culture under the benign rule of the Nalas.

At Umarkot proper, we find the traces of a fort on the bank of the river Bhaskar or Bhanskel. A Śiva temple called Nilakantheśvara or Bhāskareśvara, stands on its right bank. The lofty temple is of modern origin. But the *līṅgam* and the *Yonipīṭha* appear to be very old. In this neglected temple complex, some of the beautiful images of Umā-Maheśvara, Kārtikeya, Gaṇeśa and Bhairavī are now found.

In all probability they belong to the Nala epoch. From the innumerable finds of antiquities, we can conclude that Umarkot region, watered by rivers like Narangi, Tel, Amrāli, Banjāri, Nāṅgi, Siṅgāri and Bhānskel, was the cradle of Nala kingdom. Nalas were mostly Śaivites as is evident from their coins. Śiva temple in most villages of the region are perhaps reminiscent of that great religious tradition of which the Nalas were the ardent apostle.

Kalahandi District

Like Koraput, Kalahandi district is also exceptionally rich in Nala relics. Two copper plate⁶⁸ grants of the Nala age have been discovered here. Excavation at Asurgarh⁶⁹ and Belkhandi⁷⁰ have brought to light immense wealth of antiquities, some of which could be suitably assigned to the age of the Nalas. Beglar who visited the region in 1875-76 A.D. assigns the monuments between 6th to 8th century A.D. Recently a very important excavation was conducted at Mārāguḍa⁷¹ on the

68. Terasinga and Bariḍapada grant.

69. Sahu and others, *History of Orissa*, pp. 80-83 ; Sukla, *Op.Cit.*, pp. 97-101.

70. *K.H.R.S.*, Vol. I, No. 3, pp. 265-270.

71. Sahu, *Unpublished excavation report of Mārāguḍa valley*.

Zonk valley in the Nawapara Sub-Division of Kalahandi district by the Orissa State Archaeology under the direction of the profound archaeologist Dr. N. K. Sahu. The operation has brought to light a gigantic Śaiva-Śākta establishment. I have the privilege to participate, for some time in the excavation project.

The residential part of this religious establishment is built of burnt bricks, while stones have been employed for the temple that contains the *Yonipīṭha*. The complex is five tiered in design. In the last tier, just on the bank of the river, there is a Śiva temple, the plinth of which with the *Yonipīṭha* is intact position. To its left we find the residential apartment. Third tier which is yet to be excavated contains ruins of the complex. The 4th and 5th tiers were perhaps meant for meditation. A number of antiquities alongwith an inscribed seal have been found here. N. K. Sahu assigns the religious complex to 5th century A.D. and associates it with the Nala rulers.⁷² As evident from his report, the monastery called Trisul Vihar, has been consigned to ruthless destruction. Apparently, it seems to have been destroyed by the enemies. In fact, we get evidence from the epigraphical sources about the protracted war between the Nalas and other contemporary dynasties of the Vindhya region.⁷³

A trial trenching at another mound called Rāṇimahāl in the Mārāguḍā area has revealed structural remains of this period. The historic Jumlagarh fort on the Zonk valley is also known for its relics, some of which could be assigned to the period under discussion.⁷⁴

Bolangir and Sambalpur Districts

Based on my field work I am of the opinion that the Tel valley of Bolangir district, including the valleys of its tributaries

72. Sahu, *Op.Cit.*

73. *Ibid.*

74. See Chapter on Art and Architecture.

Suktel, Sungad and Lāant and the right valley of Oṅg river in Sambalpur and Balangir districts were under the territorial domain of the Nalas. We have made a systematic exploration of the area and have discovered huge archaeological remains, some of which are definitely ascribable to the Nalas. There is clear evidence of destruction of the Triśul monastery by the enemies.⁷⁵ However, it seems that the Śaivāchāryas and the Śaivite monks have not been massacred, as we do not find any trace of bloodshed and killing. No skeleton and even not a single piece of human bone has been reported from the excavation. Therefore, it appears that the Śaivite monks deserted the monastery in the wake of the enemies' terrible attack and proceeded to the eastern part of the Zonk river, to the Tel and Ong valleys, never to return back again. Now the finds of Śaiva relics in profusion, in this region is the only mute testimony to their movement. We also know that Skandavarman⁷⁶ was a devotee of Lord Viṣṇu and so Vaiṣṇavism also developed in Nala kingdom simultaneously, if not earlier. We find later on the amalgamation of the two cults. The composite 'Harihar' cult evolved at places like Hariṣaṅkar and Narasiṁhanātha. At this time (i.e. in 5th to 6th century A.D.) the Śakti cult with tantric mode of worship developed. The best example is Rāṇipur-Jhariāl where Śaivism and Śaktism flourished together. Details will be discussed in the chapter on religion. Here we are inclined to say that earlier ruins and relics of Rāṇipur-Jhariāl, Hariṣaṅkar and Narasiṁhanātha etc. could be assigned to Nala period. Possible from the Triśul monastery one group of monks seems to have moved following the course of the river Indra in the present Nawapara-Bhawanipatna road and reached Rāṇipur-Jhariāl and Belkandhi region. Another group appears to have taken the hill route that now connects Nawapara and Padampur and arrived at the Gandhamārdan hill region.

75. Sahu, *Op.Cit.*

76. Podagada Stone Inscription.

The present temple at Harisaṅkar dates back to 14-15th century A.D.⁷⁷ On examination I find the *Liṅga* to be very old. Sculptures of Bhairava, Gaṅgā and Yoginis housed in a tiled house near the temple can be ascribed to the period under discussion. The sculpture of Gaṅgā's descent in front of the temple is the unique in its execution and artistic representation. It signifies synthesis of *Harihara* i.e. Viṣṇu and Śiva. Sahu attributes origin of this cult to 6th-7th century A.D.⁷⁸

The images of Śiva, Viṣṇu and Śākta principles at Sainṭalā⁷⁹, Deogāon, Śauntpur⁸⁰, Tusrā, Pātnagarh⁸¹, Binkā and Surdā may be ascribed to 5th-6th century A.D. In most of these places we find ruins of ancient civilisations which corroborate our viewpoint. Brick remains, pottery, heads of terracotta and semi-precious stones have been collected by us. We have also traced out structural remains at Degāon which finds mention in the Terāsiṅgā plate of Tustikāra. A beautiful temple complex discovered at Surdā stylistically could be associated with the early temples of Rāṇipur-Jhariāl.

The images of Gaṇeśa and Śiva of Narasimhanātha on stylistic ground can be assigned to 6th-7th century A.D. Charles Fabri in his "History of the Art of Orissa"⁸² has categorically dated the four pillars of the *Maṇḍapa* of the present temple between 600-650 A.D.

Nala relics of Madhya Pradesh region

Raigarh district, Rājim region, Durg and Bastar tract are also teeming with Nala relics ascribable to 5th-6th century A.D.⁸³ Being the meeting place of various schools of art, this

77. *District Gazetteer*, Balangir, p. 484.

78. *Ibid.*

79. *K.H.R.S.*, Vol. II, Nos. 2-3.

80. *Ibid.*

81. *Ibid.*

82. Charles Fabri, *History of the Art of Orissa*, pp. 37-39.

83. *Prachy Pratibha*, Vol. V, No. 2, pp. 125-132, 143-151.

region witnessed exuberance of artistic activities, and at present, the extant beautiful images of Śaiva, Śākta and Vaiṣṇava Pantheons are mute testimony of that great movement. The life-size images of Rājīm, carved out of lime stone are unique pieces of art work. From epigraphic record⁸⁴, it is known that Rājīm area was, for sometime, the centre of activities of the Nālas.

The images of Śiva, Umā-Maheśvara, Tāndava Śiva, Gaṇeśa and Kārtikeya of Śaivism, Lakṣmi-Nārāyaṇa and Viṣṇu images of Vaiṣṇavism and Chāmunda and Mahiṣāmardini icons of Śākta sect of this period are usually found in temples and religious institutions. Subsequently erotic icons were also introduced on the temple walls as is evident from their representation on the Rājīvalochana and Lakmaṇeśvar temples.⁸⁵ The study of the art and architecture of the ancient Kośala tract of present Madhyapradesh thus, throws new light on various aspects of social, cultural and religious life of the people.

Thus archaeological finds contribute substantially to our knowledge of Nala history and culture. Their locale helps us in determining the territorial limits and geographical frontiers of the Nālas as well.

84. *E.I.*, Vol. XXVI, pp. 49-59.

85. *Prachya Pratibha*, *Ibid.*

II

Political Background of the Rise of the Nalas

After the decline and downfall of the Mauryas, the Śuṅgas and the Kāṇvas the suzerainty of north India passed into the hands of Kuśāṇas who dominated the scene for about 250 years since the later half of the 1st century B.C. with their fall a power vacuum and a critical period began in Indian History. India was then divided into a number of petty principalities which rose on the ruins of Kuśāṇa empire and fought among themselves to fill up the power vacuum. In the north-west the Republics of Yaudheyas, Arjunāyas and the Mālavas etc. emerged while on the Gangetic basin monarchical kingdoms¹ of Ahichchatra, Ayodhyā, Kauśāmbi and that of the Nāgas made their appearance. I present here a brief outline of these kingdoms as a general backdrop to the rise of the Nalas.

NORTH INDIA

The kingdom of Ahichchatra grew up during this epoch around Bareilly and Rohilkhand areas of Uttar Pradesh which was finally uprooted by Samudragupta. King Achutya² has been identified as the Last ruler of this house.

1. D. C. Sircar, *Classical Age*, Vol. II, pp. 168-177.
2. In the Allahabad *praśasti*, Achutya's name finds mention in the list of Kings of Aryāvarta whom Samudragupta exterminated.

The state of North Kośala with its capital at Ayodhyā on the bank of the river Sarayu, appears to have been ruled by two groups of kings. In the 1st century B.C. Dhanadeva, son of Phalgudeva as known from epigraph³, was the ruler. He was associated with Pusyamitra from his mother's side. The other class of rulers with their names ending in 'Mitra' are known from coins. Kings like Satyamitra, Ajumitra, Devamitra and Kumudasena ruled over here since the fall of Kuśāṇas. This family is also finally uprooted by the Guptas and Oudh region was annexed to their kingdom.

The region around Allahabad constituted the ancient kingdom of Kauśāmbi and modern 'Kośām' thirty-five miles to the South-West of Allahabad, was its capital. From numismatic evidence, it is known that 'Māghas' were ruling over this territory between the 1st century B.C. and the 4th century A.D.⁴ Very probably, the Māgha rulers were associated with the Kuśāṇas. Eventually, the kingdom of Kauśāmbi also succumbed to Gupta imperialism.

Of these principalities, the kingdom of Nāgas deserves special mention. The origin of the race could be traced back to the epic-age but here we concerned with their rise after the Kuśāṇas. According to *Purāṇas*⁵, they flourished at Vidiśā, Kāntipuri, Mathurā and Padmāvati in the 3rd and 4th century A.D. This Purāṇic version is also attested by the epigraphic and numismatic evidence. The Nāga house of Padmāvati, identified with modern Padam Pawaya near Narwar in Gwalior region was ruling on the bank of river Sind⁶. From the numismatic evidence we know that Bhavanāga, who also finds mention in the Vākāṭaka record, was the maternal grandfather of Vākāṭaka king Rudrasena-I. He is assigned to the last

3. D. C. Sircar, *Op Cit.*, p. 173.

4. *Ibid.*, p. 175.

5. *Ibid.*, p. 169, Pargiter, *The Purana Text of the Dynasties of Kali Age*, pp. 48-49.

6. *J.N.S.I.*, V, pp. 21ff.; Sircar, *Op.Cit.*, pp. 169-70.

quarter of 3rd century A.D.⁷ He was very probably a contemporary of the 1st Nala King 'Śiśuka', who is described in the *Purāṇa* as the kign of Purika, Bhavanāga was the devout worshipper of Śiva. Similarly the Vākatakas and the Nalas were also great devotees of Śiva.

From this, it is apparent that, they are not far apart, both in space and time and came to limelight with the decline of the Kuṣāṇas in north and central India. Very likely Gaṇapatiāga and Nāgasena vanquished by Samudragupta were the scions of the Nāga houses. From the epigraphic and numismatic records we get the names of nine Nāga rulers of Gwalior region. From the latter evidence the rule of a number of Nāga kings of Muthurā and Vidiśā is also known to us, who flourished between the last half of the 1st century B.C. and 1st half of the 4th century A.D. On certain rare coins of old Padmāvati region the legend 'Vyāghra' is found. Sircar has tentatively assigned the king to one 'Vyāghranāga'⁸. It is clear that the suffix 'Nāga' is not there. Therefore, it is more probable to assign it to Vyāghrarāja of Samudragupta's pillar inscription, whose successor's seal has been found in Bhita region. Since the early Nala, Nāga and Megha dynasties were ruling over contiguous territory simultaneously, it is not improbable that, the coins that are most migratory in nature, might have travelled to Padmāvati region. From the discussion it is obvious that the Nāgas emerged as a great power in the Gangetic plain in the later half of the 3rd century A.D. However, in the struggle for the imperial supremacy they finally fell a prey to the Guptas who exterminated and uprooted them in the 1st half of the 4th century A.D. from the political scene of North India.

I do not like to discuss in detail the history of these families, since the matter is beyond the purview of this work. What I like to emphasise is that, by the time the Nala emerged in parts of South Kośala and Kāntāra region, sometime in the last half

7. Sircar, *Op.Cit.*, p. 169.

8. D. C. Sircar, *Op.Cit.*, p. 171.

of the 3rd century A.D., the political condition of North India was in a critical state, parcelling out itself into a number of petty principalities, each trying to make a fortune and carve out territories on the ruins of the fading Kuśāṇas.

DECCAN

It is known from Mauryan records that, they had extended their sway over South India right from the time of Chandragupta Maurya, The Śuṅgas also had their authority in this part. Brihadratha the last Maurya king ruled over Berar (Vidarbha) through his viceroy and Pusyamitra Śuṅga (185-150 B.C.) was also the Lord of this region⁹. In the 1st century B.C. however, the hegemony of North India over this part ended and two powerful dynasties, the Sātavāhanas and the Chedis rose to power in the upper and lower Deccan respectively.

Sātavāhanas

The Sātavāhanas called themselves as the Lord of Dakṣiṇāpatha, which had varied connotations and included varied parts of the land in Deccan and Vindhya region. The early rulers seem to have exercised their sway in the upper Deccan now in the present Maharashtra region. There is no unanimity among the scholars with regard to the extent of early Sātavāhana kingdom. From the Hāthigumphā inscription of Khāravela¹⁰, it is known that the Sātavāhanas were ruling over the territory to the west of Kaliṅga. we also know that Khāravela, the Chedi king of Kaliṅga had his undisputed sway over the lower Vindhyan region. Therefore, it is certain that the early Sātavāhanas ruled over the present Maharashtra tract with occasional sway over the fringes of North-West Vindhyan region¹¹. Only after the downfall of the Chedis the Sātavāhanas extended

9. D. C. Sircar, *Op.Cit.*, p. 191.

10. N. K. Sahu, *Utkal University History of Orissa*, Vol. I, pp. 347ff.

11. N. K. Sahu, *Op.Cit.*, pp. 319-326.

their suzerainty over trans-Vindhyan region, sometime in the middle of the 2nd century A.D. So in the 1st half of the 1st century B.C. the houses of Sātavāhanas and the Chedis were founded in the upper and lower Vindhyan regions¹² respectively.

With the accession of Yajñaśrī Sātakarṇi (174-203 A.D.)¹³ (of the later Sātavāhana line) the rule of the family became vigorous and the empire extended far and wide both in the west and east. From his Nāsik inscription and coins found in eastern Madhya Pradesh and as far as Orissa, it is evident that he had a vast kingdom that extended over South Kośala region. The suzerainty of Sātavāhanas in this part is further corroborated from the account of Hieun Tsang. Yajna-Sri Sātakarṇi¹⁴ or Gautamiputra¹⁵ Sātakarṇi was the patron of the Buddhist scholar Nāgārjuna who flourished in the 2nd century A.D. For him, Sātakarṇi built a monastery in Po-lo-mo-lo-ki-li identified with Parimalarigi (Ghandhamardhan hills) of Orissa by N. K. Sahu¹⁶. Thus we have every reason to say that South Kośala was under the sway of the Sātavāhanas upto the 1st half of the 3rd century A.D. With their downfall the Vākāṭakas rose to power in the upper Deccan, to the North-West of Vindhya, in the middle of the 3rd century A.D., while the Nalas succeeded over their eastern part of the empire, to the South-East of Vindhya in the South Kośala and Kāntāra regions in the same epoch.

Vākāṭakas

Vākāṭakas were the most illustrious family, who rose on the ruins of the Sātavāhanas in the 2nd half of the 3rd century A.D. in the upper Deccan with occasional sway over central

12. *Ibid.*

13. Sircar, *Op.Cit.*, pp. 209ff., Sahu is of the opinion that Gautamiputra Sātakarṇi (106 A.D.) extended his sway over Kosala region, *History of Orissa*, p. 59.

14. Sircar, *Op.Cit.*, p. 210.

15. Sahu and Others, *Op.Cit.*

16. N. K. Sahu, *Buddhism in Orissa*, pp. 100-101.

India. They continued their rule up to the early part of the 6th century A.D.

The origin of the dynasty is shrouded in mystery. The *Vāyu Purāṇa*¹⁷ allots a long reign of 96 and 66 years to Vindhyaśakti, the founder of the dynasty and his son Pravaraseṇa-I respectively. It is apparent that taking into account the chaotic political condition in the neighbouring region the Vākāṭakas established their sway over a vast tract. Being the feudatory of the Sātavāhanas originally they consolidated their positions as independent monarchs.¹⁸ In the *Purāṇa*, they are mentioned together with the Nāgas of Vidiśā and the Kilakilas, which indicate their origin around Vidiśā (Berar) region. A reference made about 'Pravira' and king 'Śīśuka of Purika' is very much ambiguous. Purika identified with Puṣkari by G. Ramdas¹⁹ was the Nāla capital. Thus, it is an indirect reference to the contemporary origin of both the families in the same area. The territory of the two early kings seems to have been confined to the Berar region and to the North-West of Vindhya, as most of their records have been found over here. Tentatively Vindhyaśakti rise has been fixed in the middle of the 3rd century A.D.²⁰ From the Ajantā inscription of Harisena it is evident that he (Vindhyaśakti) was a Brāhmaṇa by birth. He was succeeded by his son Pravaraseṇa-I. We do not have any direct evidence of his rule but his name and achievements find mention in the records of his successors conspicuously, where he is described as '*Samrāṭ*' which gives the impression that he was a great king. He celebrated *Vājapeya* and *Aśvamedha* sacrifices. He is known to have given his son in marriage to a daughter of Nāga king—Bhavanāga.²¹ It seems that he had a farflung empire in the upper Deccan. He died sometime in the 1st half of the 4th century A.D.

17. Pargiter, *Op.Cit.*, pp. 49-50.

18. Sircar, *Op.Cit.*, p. 218.

19. *J.B.R.S.*, Vol. XXXIII, I-II, p. 19.

20. D. C. Sircar, *Op.Cit.*, p. 219.

21. Sircar, *Op.Cit.*, p. 220.

KALIṄGA

Simultaneously alongwith the Sātavāhanas the Chedis emerged in the lower Deccan in the South-East of Vindhya sometime in the 1st half of the 1st century B.C.²² On the evidence of Hariyainśa, N. K. Sahu²³ regards 'Abhichandra', the grand father of Khāravela as the founder of the Chedirāṣṭra in the Vindhya region. In course of time, the Meghavāhana family of the Chedi clan shifted to Kaliṅga, where Khāravela carved out a vast empire extending beyond the Vindhya. However, his successors could not keep up the empire in tact and in the 2nd century A.D. they finally vanished from the Kaliṅga region, which fell into the hands of Muruṇḍas or Guruṇḍas²⁴, a branch of Kuśāṇas. They ruled from Pāṭaliputra in 2nd/3rd century A.D. over an extensive territory in eastern India as is evident from the Jaina literature.²⁵ The *Purāṇas*²⁶ speak of thirteen Muruṇḍa or Guruṇḍa kings as ruling for 200 years.

The Puri-Kuśāṇa coins and the gold coin²⁷ with the legend 'Mahārājadhirāja Dharmadamadhara' recovered from Śiśupāl-garh excavation are attributed to these kings. Mahārāja Gaṇa-dhara of the Bhadrak stone inscription²⁸ is also believed to be a Muruṇḍa king. Due to paucity of evidence a connected history of the Muruṇḍas is not available to us. Very probably the king 'Guha' referred in *Purāṇas* was the last monarch of this line. Tentatively he has been assigned to the last quarter of the 3rd century A.D. or the beginning of the 4th century A.D. The '*Dāthavaṃśa*'²⁹ narrates that there was severe fight for the sacred Tooth Relics of Buddha that was enshrined at Dānta-

22. N. K. Sahu, *Utkal University History of Orissa*, Vol. I, pp. 333-34,

23. *Ibid.*, p. 330.

24. Pargiter, *Op.Cit.*, pp. 47, 72.

25. Sahu and Others, *History of Orissa*, pp. 60-62.

26. Pargiter, *Op.Cit.*

27. N. K. Sahu and Others, *Op.Cit.*

28. *Ibid.*

29. *Ibid.*

pura, the capital of Kaliṅga and in the fight Guhaśiva was killed. Whatever might be the authenticity of this episode, this much is certain that, with the fall of the Muruṇḍas by the close of the 3rd century A.D. or beginning of the 4th century A.D. chaos and confusion prevailed in Kaliṅga. On the eve of Samundragupta's invasion to South India Kaliṅga region was divided into smaller principalities. After his retreat, the Māṭharas rose to power in Kaliṅga region and ruled contemporaneously with the Nalas. They seem to have friendly relation with the Nalas.

SOUTH KOŚALA

The trans-Vindhya region was passing through a critical period in the life of her political history since the beginning of the 3rd century A.D. Its North Western division, which once formed the heart of Sātavāhana empire, fell in the hands of the Vākāṭakas and the northern fringe which was under the Kuśāṇas passed on to the Nāgas. The central portion which had varied sway of the Sātavāhanas and the Kuśāṇas and the south-eastern portion, which was under the Chedis, till the close of the 2nd century A.D., were in a state of utter political confusion. It is in the south-east of central India in the present Koraput-Kalahandi-Bastar region the Nalas made their appearance in the last part of the 3rd century A.D. In the central trans-Vindhyan area, the nerve centre of South Kośala, the Mehgas and the house of Sura appeared in the same epoch.³⁰

South Kośala variedly designated as Kośala, Dakṣiṇa Kośala and Mahākośala, was a glorious land of great antiquity. In the *Purāṇas*³¹ its location is described in the Vindhyan region (*Vindhyapariṣṭanivāsinah*). It is interesting to note that the *Purāṇas*³² even refer to 'five Kośalas'. From this it is evident that South Kośala was a vast territory, across and

30. N. K. Sahu and Others, *Op.Cit.*, pp. 62-63, also see pp. 83-84.

31. *Vāyu*, Vol. XLV, pp. 132-33, *Matsya*, p. 113.

32. Pargiter, *Op.Cit.*, p. 3.

around the Vindhyan region. In fact, we find reference to a number of dynasties ruling over South Kośala simultaneously. For example, the house of Sura, the Nalas and the Meghas are often described as ruling over Kośala in the same epoch. Verily, the traditional south Kośala is called as great Kośala or Mahākośala consisting of a number of Kośala zones or divisions.

The Imperial Gazetteer of India³³ puts the country between 19°50' and 23.7' north and 80°40 and 83°38 east with an area of 21,240 sq. miles. The area now comprises Durg, Raipur, Bastar, Raigarh, Surguja and Bilaspur districts of Madhya Pradesh and Sundargarh, Sambalpur, Bolangir, Kalahandi and Koraput district of Orissa. According to Cunningham³⁴ "Kośala or Mahākośala comprises the whole of the upper valley of the Mahandi and its tributaries from the source of Narmada at Amarkaṇṭaka in the north to the source of Mahanadi itself near Kanker on the south and from the valley of Wainganga on the west to the Hadso and Zonk river in the east. These limits have been often extended so far to embrace the hilly districts of Mandela and Balaghat on the west, upto the banks of the Winganga and the middle valley of Mahanadi on the east down to Sambalpur and Sonepur. Within its narrowest limits, the province was 200 miles in length from north to south and 125 miles in breadth from east to the west. At its greatest extent, excluding the tributary territories of Orissa, it formed a square of about 200 miles on each side".

This region is rich in history and culture right from the early times. The area seems to have been not included in the Mauryan empire. Subsequently, however, its different divisions were under the sphere of influence of the different dynasties. Since the 3rd century A.D. the Meghas, the House of Suras and the Nalas were in possession of its different zones.

33. *Imperial Gazetteer*, Vol. X, p. 202.

34. *A.S.R.I.*, Vol. XVII, p. 68.

Meghas

The *Purāṇa*³⁵ states about nine very powerful and wise kings celebrated as 'Megha' (*Meghā iti Samākhyaṭā buddhi-manto navaiva tu*). Pargiter places them in the 3rd century A.D.³⁶ N. K. Sahu³⁷ says that Mahendra of Kośala mentioned in the Allahabad pillar inscription of Samudragupta belonged to Megha dynasty. The passage in question runs "*Kośalaka Mahendra (Maha or Meha) Megha Kāntāraka Vyāgrarāja...*" This has been wrongly read by scholars as "*Kośalaka Mahendra, Mahākāntaraka Vyāghrarāja*". In fact, Fleet³⁸ who edited it says that, he has attempted to restore the illegible portion as 'Maha' which in fact, reads as 'Meha' or 'Megha'³⁹. D. C. Sircar⁴⁰ has associated the Megha kings with the Māghas of Kauśāmbi. He has tried to trace the history of the family since the 1st half of the 1st century B.C. and believes that "this dynasty of rulers must originally have been subordinate to the Kuśāṇas. As some of the kings of this house had names ending with the word Māgha, it is probable that they are the Meghas mentioned in the *Purāṇas*. The wide extent of the Megha dominion is indicated by the finds of their epigraphic and numismatic records not only in Allahabad district but also in the Fatepur district as well as in the Rewa state of Bundelkhand".

This view of Sircar is not acceptable, since Megha and Māgha are two distinct and separate dynasties. Moreover, Māghas are associated with the Kuśāṇa, while Megha are a branch of the Mahāmeghavāhana dynasty. On the Purāṇic evidence, Pargiter⁴¹ places the Megha kings in the 3rd century A.D. and from numismatic evidence the Māghas have been

35. Pargiter, *Op.Cit.*, p. 51.

36. *Ibid.*

37. N. K. Sahu and Others, *Op.Cit.*, pp. 62-63.

38. *C.I.I.*, III, p. 7.

39. Sahu informed this on discussion.

40. D. C. Sircar, *Classical Age*, III, pp. 174-177.

41. Pargiter, *Op.Cit.*, pp. 52 and 73.

assigned to the 1st century B.C. In this connection the views of N. K. Sahu⁴² appear very plausible.

He is of the opinion that scion of the Chedi Mahāmeghāvāhana dynasty to which Khāravēla belonged having been defeated by the Murundas in the 2nd century A.D. shifted from Kaliṅga to Kośala region where they succeeded in founding a new kingdom. In the *Purāṇas* they are described as Meghas.

Sahu⁴³ reports that a gold coin with the portrait of a king riding a horse on the obverse and the reverse containing a king in plain dress with the legend 'Śrī Rīsabhadēva' in the character of 3rd century A.D. was discovered near Pātnagarh in Bolangir district. He attributes him to the Megha family. The circulation of gold coins testified to the prosperous rule of the Meghas. Further he says that the correct reading of the name of Mahendra of Allahabad pillar inscription is 'Mahendramegha' and he belongs to the Megha family. Thus, it appears that the Megha ruled for nine generations from the 2nd century A.D. for about 200 years till they were replaced by the Nalas. However, it appears plausible that for sometime the Meghas and the Nalas ruled simultaneously. In the present state of our knowledge we cannot illustrate anything about the rest seven rulers of the dynasty.

Family of Sura

A copper plate grant of Mahārāja Bhīmasena-II discovered at Ārang in Madhya Pradesh and originally issued from Suvarnādi, records the names of six generations of kings. The charter is dated in Gupta era 182 i.e. 502 A.D.⁴⁴

V. V. Mirashi⁴⁵ opines that the house of Mahārāja Sura to which Bhīmasena belonged, is a descendant of Mahendra of

42. N. K. Sahu and Others, *Op.Cit.*, pp. 62-63.

43. *Ibid.*, p. 63.

44. Some scholars read it as Gupta Era 282. See *History of Orissa*, pp. 83-86.

45. *Ibid.*, p. 85.

Kośala, who ruled over Raipur and Bilaspur area. The view is untenable because in that case there will be no place for the Meghas, who ruled in Raipur-Bilaspur area upto 5th/6th century A.D. N. K. Sahu⁴⁶ has identified Subarnanādi of the grant with the river Sungod flowing in Bolangir-Kalahandi districts and Vatapālīka with Barpālī and believes that the territory of the house of Sura was in the western Orissa near the eastern border of Madhya Pradesh. According to his version "it is futile to locate it in Raipur-Bilaspur region or to identify the family of Sura with one of the ruling dynasties of Kośala, Niṣadha, Kāntāra or Korāla. In the 4th/5th century A.D. the traditional kingdom of south Kośala had been parcelled out into a number of independent states. The kingdom referred in the Arang plates seems to be one of them".

From the discussion, it is obvious that traditional South Kośala was split up into a number of petty principalities in the 3rd century A.D. Similarly, North India was also in turmoil in the same epoch. Later on in the beginning of the 4th century A.D. the Guptas succeeded in acquiring the imperial authority by uniting the smaller states and Samudragupta made a dashing raid into the Deccan which was then divided into petty warring princely principalities. The Vākāṭakas ruled and consolidated in the upper Deccan while to its south in Bastar-Koraput and Kalahandi region, the Nalas with a humble beginning in the last quarter of the 3rd century A.D. emerged as a power to reckon with, after the retreat and return of Samudragupta from his southern expedition.

46. N. K. Sahu and Others, *Op.Cit.*, pp. 83-86.

III

Origin of the Nalas and their Rise to Power

Third century A.D. was a critical and dark age in Indian history. Northern and Central India and the Deccan regions were in a state of utter political confusion. Numerous local chiefs appeared and tried to carve out independent territories. The Nalas emerged in the south eastern part of the Vindhyan region in the ancient Niṣadha country sometime in the 2nd half of the 3rd century A.D.

ORIGINAL HOMELAND

The identification of the original homeland of the Nalas is still a matter of controversy. Nevertheless, from the *Purāṇas*¹ it is definitely known that the descendants of 'Nala' ruled over Niṣadha, "all the kings of Niṣadha, born in the family of Nala, valiant and very powerful, will exist till the termination of the 'Manus' (*Naiṣadhāḥ pāṛthivāḥ sarve bhaviṣyantyā Manukhyāt, Nalavaṁśa prasutās-te vīryavanto mahāvalāḥ*). Pargiter assigns these kings to the 3rd century A.D.²

From this Puranic reference two things are very apparent i.e. 'Niṣadha' was the kingdom and the descendants of Nala

1. Pargiter, *The Purāṇa Text of the Dynasties of Kali Age*, pp. 51, 72.

2. *Ibid.*

of epic fame ruled over it. Unfortunately, most of the scholars³ who have contributed to Nala history and culture, have wrongly interpreted the Puranic statement and say that the descendants of Nala ruled over Kośala. In the previous chapter, I have attempted to show that traditional Kośala was a vast territory and was split up into a number of smaller Kośala units, each unit having the same name and in the heart of Kośala (i.e. Raipur-Bilaspur-Sambalpur regions) the Meghas were the masters. Thus (in the 3rd/4th century A.D. when the Nalas emerged) Niṣadha and Kośala were not one and the same territory. Nalas ruled in Niṣadha and the Meghas in Kośala. Of course, later on the Nalas are known to have occupied Kośala region. Now my attempt will be to trace the original home of the Nalas in Niṣadha region.

Niṣadha

There is no unanimity amongst scholars as regards the location of Niṣadha. In the religious literature like *Veda*, *Purāṇa*, *Mahābhārata* and *Rāmāyaṇa*, Kośala and Niṣadha find mention as two adjacent geographical units. It is also stated that Niṣadha is contiguous to Vidharbha or Berar. From this it is obvious that Niṣadha was located between Kośala and Vidarbha. S. N. Pradhan⁴ is of the opinion that South Kośala, Chedi, Dasārṇa, Niṣadha and Vidarbha were situated at the foot of Vindhya since early times. From the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*⁵ we know that Nala of Niṣadha was a king of the south. In the *Mahābhārata*, the Nala episode finds conspicuous mention. Nala after losing his kingdom to his brother, was banished from his country alongwith his wife. While roaming in the jungle,

3. B. V. Krishna Rao, *Early History of Āndhardeśa*, p. 658; P. L. Misra, *I.H.Q.*, Vol. XXXVI, p. 247; G Ramdas, *J.B.R.S.*, Vol. XXXIII, Pts. I, II, p. 14; D. K. Ganguli, *Historical Geography and Dynastic History of Orissa*, p. 261.

4. S. N. Pradhan, *Chronology of the ancient India*, pp. 202ff.

5. P. L. Misra, *Political History of Chhatisgarh*, p. 13f.

he showed the different paths to his wife. He pointed out the roads to Vidarbha and Kośala from the forest region of his own country⁶. From these references now we have the following points : (1) Vidarbha-Kośala and Niṣadha are three separate and adjacent kingdoms at the foot of Vindhya. (2) Niṣadha was located to the south of Vindhya. (3) Niṣadha was situated in the middle of Kośala and Vidarbha.

Vidarbha, the kingdom of Damayanti's father, has been identified with Berar (Nagpur region). We have already located Kośala in the present Bilaspur-Raipur-Sambalpur area. The middle region, comprising present Bastar. Koraput-Kalahandi districts, between Kośala and Vidarbha, is apparently the ancient Niṣadha kingdom, over which epic Nala ruled and subsequently there the historical Nalas also had their sway.

In support of our identification we put forth the following arguments and evidences as well.

1. The famous grammarian Pāṇini, who flourished in the 7th/6th century B.C. has narrated in the '*Aṣṭādhyāī*'⁷ that Niṣadha and Vidarbha are two adjacent countries.
2. In the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa*⁸ it is stated that Vindhya mountain guards the Niṣadha kingdom in the North-West and the river Payosini flows nearby and therefore Wilson's⁹ identification of Niṣadha between the Sātpurā mountain ranges and north-west of Berar may not be tenable. Because in that case it cannot be a country near Kośala at the foot of Vindhya.
3. D. C. Sircar's¹⁰ identification of Narwar in the Śivapuri district as the capital of Niṣadha is also unacceptable because Narwar is to the North of Vindhya whereas it

6. *Ibid.*

7. H. L. Sukla, *Prāchīna Bastar*, p. 43 ; G. R. Bhandarkar, *History of Deccan*, p. 15.

8. P. L. Misra, *Op Cit.*, p. 15.

9. H. L. Sukla, *Op.Cit.*, p. 44.

10. *J.B.R.S.*, Vol., LI, II, p. 106.

is definitely known that 'Niṣadha' is to the south of Narmadā.

4. G. Ramdas and N. K. Sahu¹¹ have rightly identified Puṣkari i.e., modern Poḍāgaḍa in Koraput district of Orissa as the capital of the Nalas. Because we find here extensive ruins of a city ascribable to 3rd-4th century A.D. A copper plate grant of Nala king Arthapati has been issued from Puṣkari and the stone inscription of his successor Skandavarman is still lying on the hill fort. Other Nala relics i.e., coins and epigraphs have been found from Bastar-Durg and Kalahandi districts, which indicate that Niṣadha comprised these regions. But Ramdas¹² wrongly calls the territory as Kośala instead of Niṣadha by wrongly quoting the Puranic evidence that the descendants of Nala ruled over Kośala, where it has been clearly stated that the descendants of Nala ruled over Niṣadha. Like Ramdas, many other scholars have also confounded the territorial limits of the Nala kingdom. Like other countries, Niṣadha country appears to have derived its name from 'Niṣādha' i.e., forest tribes who inhabited the region. Infact, Bastar-Koraput-Kalahandi region (i.e., ancient Niṣadha) is even today teeming with numerous and diverse forest tribes. In most of the reference cited above, it is mentioned in unambiguous term that Niṣadha is located at the foot of Vindhya to its south in between Kośala and Vidarbha apparently indicating the 'Kāntāra' region i.e. modern Bastar-Koraput-Kalahandi area found mention in literary and epigraphic records. From the Allahabad pillar inscription of Samudragupta we know that Vyāghrarāja was the king of Kāntāra at the time of his southern conquest about 350 A.D.

11. Sahu, *Utkal University History of Orissa*, Vol. I, p. 514.

12. *J.B.R.S.*, Vol. XXXIII, p. 18.

Kāntāra

Kāntāra which finds mention in the Gupta epigraph is also known to us from the *Mahābhārata*¹³.

“*Sa vijitya durādharma Bhiṣmakam mādrinandanam
Kauśalādhipatiṁ chaiva tathā veṇvātāradhipaṁ
Kāntārakasya samare tathā prāk kauśalānṭupān
Nātakeyansch samare yathā herambhakam yudhi*”.

In the pillar inscription of Samudragupta, Vyāghrarāja has been mentioned as the king of Kāntāra. But the expression “*Kośala ka Mahendra Megha*” and “*Kāntāraka Vyāghrarāja*” is strongly read and interpreted by scholars¹⁴. In the inscription the word Megha after the name of Mahendra is illegible. As stated elsewhere, Fleet¹⁵ who edited it has also indicated this. However, in his attempt to restore the illegible portion, he has used the term ‘Maha’ and connected it as adjective of Kāntāra and subsequent scholars have followed it without scrutinising the probable restoration of Fleet. N. K. Sahu¹⁶ has pointed out that the correct reading is “*Mahendra Megha* and *Kāntāraka Vyāghrarāja*”. His contention is also supported by the *Mahābhārata* which categorically associates Kāntāra as an adjacent territory of Kośala to its south. Similarly, the *Rāmāyaṇa*, *Purāṇas* and *Vrihat Samhitā* mention Kāntāra and not Mahākāntāra¹⁷. In the light of the above evidence, we do not agree with H. L. Sukla¹⁸ that in the Allahabad *Praśasti* there is mention of *Mahākāntāra* where Vyāghrarāja was the king. His argument that since Harisena the composer of the *Praśasti* was a reputed Sanskrit scholar, he must not have committed such a minor mistake to write Maha for Megha. The medial ‘e’ of

13. *Mahābhārata*, Sabhāparva, p. 31.

14. The information is collected from N. K. Sahu, also see *History of Orissa*, pp. 63-65.

15. *C.I.I.*, Vol. III, p. 7.

16. Sahu, *Op.Cit.*

17. H. L. Sukla, *Op.Cit.*, p. 24.

18. *Ibid.* p. 25.

Megha is illegible and originally it seems to have indicated Megha, and we know from *Purāṇas*¹⁹ that the Meghas were ruling over Kośala.

So far the location of Kāntāra is concerned, there is no unanimity among scholars. S. N. Rajguru²⁰ identifies it with Kalahandi district of Orissa. R. C. Majumdar²¹ identifies the forest region in Jeypur state of Orissa while G. Ramdas²² with the Jharkhanda state of Ganjam and Visakhapatna district and S. Chattopadhyaya²³ with the Jeypore forest region of Orissa. J. B. Dubreuil²⁴ locates Kāntāra to the south of Sonepur in Orissa while R. K. Mukherjee²⁵ around Sambalpur and K. P. Jayaswal²⁶ equates it with Kanker and Bastar region. N. K. Sahu²⁷ locates Kāntāra in the present Koraput and Kalahandi districts of Orissa.

Most of the scholars have located Kāntāra in the forest tract of Bastar-Koraput and Kalahandi. In fact, Kāntāra which means a dense forest region is exceedingly befitting. Even today the forest tract of Kalahandi-Koraput and Bastar regions is called by the same name. It appears to be the same as Mahāvana referred to in the Amarāvati stupa inscription.

Synchronism of Niṣadha with Kāntāra

From the discussion it is very clear that Niṣadha country where epic Nala and subsequently the historical Nalas ruled was one and the same with Kāntāra of which Vyāghrarāja was the king during Samudragupta's southern expedition²⁸. As has

19. Pargiter, *Op.Cit.*, p. 51.

20. S. N. Rajguru, *Inscriptions of Orissa*, Vol. I, Pt. II, p. 105.

21. Majumdar, *Classical Age*, Vol. III, p. 9.

22. *I.H.Q.*, Vol. I, p. 684.

23. S. Chattopadhyaya, *Early History of North India*, p. 185.

24. J. B. Dubreuil, *Ancient History of Deccan*, p. 61.

25. R. K. Mukherjee, *Gupta Empire*, p. 126.

26. K. P. Jayaswal, *History of India*, p. 137.

27. N. K. Sahu, *Op.Cit.*, p. 433.

28. H. L. Sukla, *Op.Cit.*, p. 46.

been shown Niṣadha was located at the foot of the Vindhya between south Kośala and Vidarbha and comprised the present Koraput-Kalahāndi districts of Orissa and Bastar district of M.P. (which were included in the Kāntāra country). Therefore, it is certain that this part is known by both the names. Now, we have to find out when and how long they continued to be so.

The antiquity of Niṣadha goes to the remote past and Kalahāndi-Koraput and Bastar regions were known by this name since early times. In the *Mahābhārata*²⁹ it is known by both the names. Kāntāra is referred to as situated between Wainganga and Kośala and in the Nala episode, Niṣadha invariably occurred in the same work and meant the same region as well. In the *Vāyu* and *Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇas*³⁰ Niṣadha has been mentioned.

In the *Rāmāyaṇa*, Niṣadha finds mention only in connection with the story of Nala-Damayantī and as a general contemporary geographical unit its reference is conspicuous by its absence and the region came to be known as Kāntāra. Gradually this name gained popularity as a contemporary geographical unit and finds mention in the *Rāmāyaṇa*, *Purāṇas* and *Bṛihat Samhitā*³¹. However, the name Niṣadha is not altogether wiped out. We get it in the *Aṣṭādhyāyī* of Pāṇini and even in the inscription of the 8th century A.D. of king Prithivīyāghra³². As discussed 'Kāntāra' finally found mention in the historical records of Samudragupta and after that we do not hear about it. The Nalas in the 4th/5th century A.D. expanded their kingdom both in the north-east and the south-west of their cradle land Bastar-Koraput-Kalahāndi and the name Kāntāra and Niṣadha extinguished for ever. The name adopted is not known clearly.

29. *Sabhāparva XXXI*, also see, *Utkal University History of Orissa*, Vol. I, pp. 432-33.

30. Pargiter, *Op.Cit.*, p. 51.

31. H. L. Sukla, *Op.Cit.*, p. 24.

32. *Indian Antiquary*, Vol. VIII, p. 273.

Some scholars, however, use the name south Kośala for their territory.

Apart from these two geographical names, we find the name of the area as 'Ātavika' territory in the Rock Edict XIII of Aśoka.³³ In the Hāthigumpha inscription of Khāravela this part was called Vidyādhara³⁴ and was perhaps a military recruiting ground and in the Sātavāhana records it finds mention as Mahāvana. It is known to have formed a part of the Asmaka *Māhājanapada*, mentioned in the list of Śoḍaśa *Mahājanapada* of the Anguṭṭara Nikāya. From the Seravani-jiya Jātaka³⁵ we know that trade and commerce were carried on through the river 'Telavāha' identified with the Tel river. It is originated in the border of present Koraput and Bastar districts from an insignificant shallow pond at Taragon known as 'Telbandh' near the find spot of the Keśaribeḍā grant of Arthipati (hardly at a distance of 25 km. to the North-West of Poḍāgoḍa, the capital of the Nalas).

Tel valley was the very heart of the early Nala kingdom. The *Seravanijiya Jātaka* indirectly testifies to the flourishing trade and commerce in this part in the Buddhist age. In fact, the thickly wooded wild tract of Bastar-Koraput-Kalahandi, the ancient Niṣadha and Kāntāra country, was fortunate in having a wonderful landscape of hills and dales quite befitting to nourish a rich civilisation. The richness of the land is amply testified in the accounts of the early British administrators who saw and surveyed the region. It is said, "the plateau of Chhattisgarh is the finest in the whole country. Owing to the vicinity of hills and forests all around, the rains are so regular that artificial irrigation even for the crop is unnecessary and unknown. So good and moist is the soil that even sugarcane can be raised without irrigation. For mile, further than the eye can reach, there is, in Autumn, a waving harvest of rice and in

33. *E I.*, II, pp. 246ff.

34. N. K. Sahu, *Op.Cit.*, pp. 405ff. ; Sukla, *Op.Cit.*, pp. 9ff.

35. H. L. Sukla, *Op.Cit.*, p. 3.

Spring, of wheat. The cultivated and cultivable area of the plateau cannot be less than 20,000 sq. miles. But the plain so proptiously endowed by the nature is, after all, an oasis in the isolated region. On the North and the East, there are the savage hills of Mandala and of the Gurjat. On the West, the rugged district that skirts the left bank of the wain-Ganga, on the south that interminable length of forest and Hill that stretched down to the Indrawati".³⁶ It is futile to find a more exact description of the land.

Mahābhārata has not specified the location of Niṣadha but has referred to its capital 'Giriprastha'. H. L. Sukla³⁷ interprets that Giriprastha which means plain land surrounded by hills, is an indirect allusion to Niṣadha country itself, which is full of forests, through the medium of its capital's description. It is possible in a poetic composition to describe an area indirectly in the similar manner stated above.

In the light of the foregoing discussion it is obvious that Niṣadha, the original home of epic Nala, was one and the same with Kāntāra, where Vyāghrarāja was the king during Samudragupta's time. This view is supported by H. L. Sukla³⁸ as well. On the basis of the provenance of the Nala records i.e. coins and epigraphs B. V. Krishnarao³⁹ localises the territory of the early Nalas between Berar in the West and Bastar or Jeypore in the east. In his own words, "it seems to have been bounded by the river Wainganga on the west, the Indrāvati on the south, the great mountain range known as the Malayagiri or Eastern Ghats on the east and the Mikal range on the north". At present huge archaeological materials—epigraphic, numismatic and monumental ascribable to the Nalas, have come to our light in Zonk and Suktel valleys, which also as has been shown,

36. *The report on the Administration of the Central Province upto August 1862*, R. Temple, Para 278, p. 57 qtd. by P. L. Mishra, *Op.Cit.*, pp. 3-4.

37. H. L. Sukla, *Op.Cit.*, p. 44.

38. Sukla, *Op.Cit.*, pp. 44-45.

39. Krishnarao, *Op.Cit.*, p. 658.

was the indispensable part of Kāntāra. So the Nala kingdom definitely extended over this part as well. We can, thus, now define the extent of Nala empire concisely afresh. In the west it extended up to Wainganga, in the south upto the upper course of Nāgāvali, in the east upto Tel and Suktel and in the north it spread in the upper course of Mahanadi right from Sihawā down to Sambalpur and Sonepur in Orissa. However, we have to note that, this vast area rightly to be designated as an empire, was under the domination of the Nalas when they were at the zenith of their political supremacy. Their original homeland seems to have been confined over Bastar-Koraput-Kalahandi region watered by the rivers Tel, Indrā and the upper course of Mahanadi upto Arang area in the vicinity of Raipur. Sukla⁴⁰ and Sahu⁴¹ have also identified this region as the cradle of Nala Kingdom which is the same Niṣadha of *Purāṇas* and Kāntāra of the inscription as well. The findspots of the Nala Coins Eḍengā and Kulia in M.P. and the inscriptions at Keśaribeḍā and Poḍāgaḍa in Orissa, together with their other relics and ruins, amply testify to our contention. Very probably it was the same 'Nalavādiviṣaya' mentioned in the Kurnool Grant⁴² of the western Chalukya king Vikramaditya-I.

The wide occurrence of place names like Nuaparā, Narla, Nandapur, Nawarangpur in Kalahandi and Koraput districts of Orissa and Nalvad, Nalasagara, Nalgondā etc. in Bastar district are pehraps frail reminiscence of Nala domination over this tract in the past. G. Ramdas⁴³ is of the opinion that the river Indrāvati flowing in Koraput district has been named after Indrasenā, the daughter of epic Nala. There is a place called 'Karekot' in Bastar district. H. L. Sukla⁴⁴ thinks that it might

40. Sukla, *Op.Cit.*, p. 45.

41. *District Gazetteer, Koraput*, pp. 46-48.

42. *J.B.B.R.S.*, Vol. XVI, pp. 225, 235.

43. *Ibid.*

44. H. L. Sukla, *Op.Cit.*, p. 45.

be the corrupt form of 'Korkoṭaka' who was the Nāga king in this part and was a good friend of Nala.

In this context we like to point out that the rivulet 'Nāngi' which flows round Poḍāgaḍa, the ancient capital of the Nalas in North-eastern direction, is probably another frail reminiscence of Nala rule. Similarly, the present revenue village 'Bhandariguḍā' of which Poḍāgaḍa is a part seems to have derived its name from Bhavadaṭṭa the great Nala king who finds mention in the Rithapur Charter and the Poḍāgaḍa stone inscription of his son Skandavarman. Interestingly, this area is full of ruins and relics ascribable to the Nalas. A village named 'Andhri' one mile away from Keśaribeḍā, which has been identified with Keśelaka *grāma* of the grant⁴⁵ of Arthapati, perhaps owes its name to him. Thus, Bastar-Koraput-Kalahandi region with the capital at Poḍāgaḍa in its centre was the cradle of culture and early homeland of the Nalas.

ORIGIN

After the identification of the original Kingdom of the Nalas, I attempt here to trace the origin of the dynasty.

Mythological Origin

There is no definite account or evidence of their ancestry either in their records or in other literature. From the *Purāṇas*⁴⁶, it is known that the descendants of Nala ruled over Niṣadha. Interestingly, historical Nala kings claim their origin from the epic Nala in their records. In the Rithapur Grant⁴⁷ of Bhavadaṭṭa, we find the expression "*Nalanṛipa Varṇasaprasuṭah*", in the Kesaribeḍā Grant⁴⁸ of Mahārāja Arthapati "*Nalanṛipati Kulānvayah*", in the Poḍāgaḍa stone inscription of

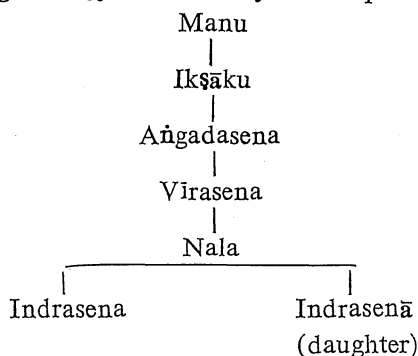
45. Kesaribeda Grant.

46. Pargiter, *Op.Cit.*, p. 51.

47. *E.I.*, XIX, pp. 100-104.

48. *Ibid.*, XXVIII, p. 16, *J.B.R.S.*, XXXIV, Pts. I-II, p. 41.

the king Skandavarman⁴⁹ "*Nalānvayamukasya*" in the Rajim stone inscription of Viṣṇuśaṅka⁵⁰ "*Khyātonoponala*" and in the Pandia Pathar Grant⁵¹ of Mahārājādhirāja Bhīmasena "*Nalavamsodbhava Kulakamalāṅka*". From these expressions it is obvious that these kings who trace their pedigree from the epic Nala belong to the Nala dynasty. But we not get a genealogical list anywhere to connect the historical Nala kings with their progenitor epic Nala. From the puranic evidence we get the following genealogy of the family of the epic Nala.



According to *Matsya Purāṇa* and *Harivaṃśa* they belong to the Solar race but in the *Mahābhārata* they are ascribed to Lunar race⁵². It is also stated in the *Matsya Purāṇa* that they are of a Kṣatriya clan in the lineage of Ikṣāku, the son of Manu⁵³. As there is no connecting link between the mythological Nala line and the historical Nala rulers, it is difficult to accept their mythological origin in the present state of our knowledge.

Indigenous Origin

It seems very probable that the Nalas originated locally,

49. *E.I.*, XXI, p. 55.

50. *Ibid.*, XXIV, p. 49.

51. *O.H.R.J.*, Vol. VI, Pt. II and III, p. 100.

52. Rajguru, *Inscriptions of Orissa*, Vol. I, Pt. 2, p. 107.

53. H. L. Sukla, *Op.Cit.*, p. 47.

sometime in the 2nd half of the 3rd century A.D. from a local non-Aryan tribe. As regards their emergence, we get a frail and indirect reference in the *Vāyu Purāṇa*⁵⁴. While narrating the origin of the Vākātakas, a place named 'Purika' finds mention in it, which G. Ramdas⁵⁵ is inclined to identify with 'Puṣkari' (modern Poḍāgaḍa) the capital of the Nalas⁵⁶. There is difference of opinion among scholars as to whether 'Purika' was the early capital of the Vākātakas or the Nalas. Altekar⁵⁷ is of the opinion that "Purika situated somewhere in Berar, western C.P. was the earliest Vākātika capital as mentioned in the *Purāṇas*. Later on it was shifted to Nandivardhan near Ramtek, about 13 miles north of Nagpur". D. C. Sircar⁵⁸ writes "Vindhyaśakti is mentioned in association with a people called the 'Kilakilās' who are styled Yavanas or Vriṣas in the *Purāṇa* and may have been foreigners related to the Śakas of western India and also with the Nāga kings of Vidiśā of East Malwa. Pravira is said to have ruled at the city called 'Kañchanaka' and performed a number of *Vajimedha* or *Vajepeya* sacrifices. Curiously, however, Vindhyaśakti is mentioned after the Kilakilās, the Nāgas of Vidiśā and other rulers are mentioned between Vindhyaśakti and his son and the relation between 'Pravira' and the king of Purika called

54. Sircar, *Classical Age*, Vol. II, pp. 217-218; Pargiter, *Op.Cit.*, pp. 50-51.

55. *J.B.R.S.*, XXXIII, Part-II, p. 19.

56. Poḍāgaḍa stone inscription of Skandavarman, Kesaribeḍā grant of Arthapati.

57. Altekar, *A New History of Indian People*, pp. 93-123.

Elsewhere he writes "Purāṇa mentions Vindhyaśakti the founder of the dynasty as a ruler of Vidiśā near Bhopal and Purika which is mentioned as its early capital is connected with Vidarbha (Modern) Berar and Aṣmaka by ancient Geography".

Foot Note :—"The Purika province is coupled with Daśārṇa in *Bṛihat Samhitā*—XIV, 10 and mentioned alongwith Vidarbha and Aṣmaka in the *Nārkeṇḍeya Purāṇa*, CVII, 49; *Ibid.*

58. Sircar, *Op. Cit.*, pp. 217-218.

'Śiśuka' mentioned immediately before him is not specified". However, it is apparent that 'Śiśuka' was the king of 'Purika' and Pravira was the king of 'Kañchanaka or Chaṇaka' and Purika and Kañchanaka or Chaṇaka are not one and the same place. The early Vākāṭakas under Pravira ruled in 'Chaṇaka' while king Śiśuka ruled from Purika which is very probably the same Puṣkari, the capital of Nalas.

Due to want of definite evidence we cannot say with certainty if Śiśuka was a Nala king. If we are to accept the view of G. Ramdas, 'Śiśuka' the contemporary of Pravira mentioned in the *Vāyu Purāṇa*, was a Nala King. In this connection he writes, "the bull emblem on the coins and the phraseology on the coins of the Vākāṭakas and the copper plate charters of the Nala kings lead me to suspect that both the families lived together at first and were then separated to different places for strategic purpose, the Nalas remaining in the original place and the Vākāṭaka founding Chaṇaka. In such a case 'Purika' must have been the vernacular form of Puṣkari"⁵⁹. The Kilakilās mentioned in the *Purāṇas* may be identified with the Karkotaka Nāga family of Niṣadha region whose king was a friend of the epic Nala. In the same work they are styled as 'Yavanas' or 'Vriṣas' and related to the Sākas and Nāgas⁶⁰. However, as pointed out by Sircar⁶¹ "it is difficult to determine the precise meaning or authenticity of these Purāṇic details about the Vākāṭakas". Therefore we cannot say definitely anything about the origin of the early Nalas on the evidence of the *Purāṇas* as well. But from the discussion, certain important points on their origin, could be convincingly drawn which also help us in fixing their early chronology.

As we know the 3rd century A.D. was obscure in the spectrum of Indian History. The imperial authorities of the Sātavāhanas and the Kuṣāṇas had sunken low and petty chieftains of

59. *J.B.R.S.*, XXXIII, Pts. 1-2, p. 19,

60. Sircar, *Op.Cit.*, p. 217.

61. *Ibid.*

the indigenous stock availed opportunity to establish new kingdoms. The Vākātakas and the Nalas perhaps at this juncture emerged in the same region and in the same epoch in the trans-Vindhyan area. Other indigenous princes like the Nāgas also rose in other places. Thus, the contemporaneity of the origin of the Vākātakas and the Nalas is very probable. According to epigraphic evidence the Vākātakas were Brahmins and the Nalas were Kṣatriyas. So they definitely do not belong to one family. But as would be discussed, the Nalas appear to have belonged to indigenous non-Aryan stock (i.e. forest tribes or Nisādas) originally inhabiting in the Vindhya region. With a humble beginning as petty feudatories in course of time they carved out a big kingdom and subsequently associated their family with the epic Nala who was in remote antiquity ruling over the same territory. The greatness and wide popularity of Nala episode might have induced them to establish their pedigree with the epic Nala.

Our contention in regard to the indigenous origin of the Nala is essentially based on the following arguments⁶². In ancient times, it was a practice with the ruling families to associate their ancestry with some mythological beings. Even some dynasties like the Kuśāṇas called themselves as *Deva Putra* and associated their progeny directly with the god. This is popularly known as the divine origin theory of kingship. In the same manner the tribals tracing their origin initially from tree, animals, hills and sun, became ruling powers with acquisition of wealth and later on associated their origin with some mythological or supernatural beings. By way of elucidation we can cite a few examples.

The Somavaṃśī kings of Orissa associated their origin with the moon and Panduvaṃśa, the Śailodbhavas called themselves as the offsprings of the mountain, the Bhaṇjas traced their origin from the egg of a peacock and the Gajapatis claimed their descent from the solar race etc. The reason behind is to stress

62. Sukla, *Op.Cit.*, pp. 48-53.

the divine origin of kingship, thereby commanding respect in the society.

In early times the non-Aryan ruling class, those who were beyond the pole of the Brahmanic and Kṣatriya society attempted to raise their social status by associating their families with the Brāhmaṇas or high Kṣatriyas. Through the process of social mobility the ruling chiefs achieved social, political and economical status which led them to maintain matrimonial relationship with ruling chiefs of the Aryan stock. The engagement of Brahmin priest in socio-religious ceremonies further accentuated the royal status. Some non-Aryan tribal royal families of the south are known to have celebrated *Hiranyagarbha* sacrifice to justify their origin from the *Hiranya Yoni*⁶³.

The totemistic origin of the Nalas as the indigenous tribals may also be taken into account⁶⁴. 'Nal' or 'Nala' is the name of a tree or a species of grass which might have been the totemistic symbol of the early Nala kings. The names of the three early kings viz. Vyāgrarāja, Vrisadhvaja and Varāharāja show their totemistic and animistic relation with animals. Most probably people who looked after and revered the 'Nal' plant or shrub might have been known as Nalas. Even now, many non-Aryan tribals worship the totemistic objects like tree or animal as their family deities from which they trace their origin. Thus, the 'Nal' plant or shrub might have been the early Nala kings' totemistic symbol from which they traced their descent. With the increase of their political importance as a ruling power, the totemistic Nala rulers might have associated their origin with the 'Epic Nala'. That is why they repeatedly call themselves as '*Nalānvaya* or *Nalovaṃsodbhava*'. Had they belonged to either a Brāhmaṇa or Kṣatriya class, they would not have mentioned again and again as *Nalānvaya* in their records to glorify their origin. It is known that epic Nala belonged to the *Ikṣāku* race and so the historical Nalas should have called their family as

63. Sircar, *The successors of Sātavāhanas in the lower Deccan*, pp. 50-124.

64. Sukla, *Op.Cit.*, p. 49.

Ikṣākuvaṃsa instead of *Nalavaṃsa* had they not been to totemistic tribals. Therefore, it is probable that the Nalas might have been totemistic tribals originally⁶⁵.

In support of this theory we can put forth the following examples of totemistic royal houses. From the Talgunḍa inscription of Kadamba king Kākusthavarman⁶⁶, it is known that his family owes its origin to the Kadamba tree which was initially their family symbol. At present the 'Kujur' community of Chhotanagpur trace their beginning from a 'Kujur' or date palm tree⁶⁷. Similar is the case with the Vaidumba family⁶⁸ of the Āndhra country.

FOUNDING OF THE DYNASTY

There is no unanimity amongst scholars as regards the earliest Nala king who founded the dynasty. The Purāṇic evidences warranted in Vāyu and Brahmāṇḍa *purāṇa*⁶⁹ seem to be correct and accordingly we may place the beginning of Nala dynasty sometime in the 3rd century A.D. The records of the Nala kings definitely assign them to the 4th century A.D.⁷⁰ on the ground of palaeography, as the records are not dated in any specific era. On the evidence of the Nala coins, V. V. Mirashi⁷¹, regards 'Varāharāja' as the earliest king of the dynasty and assigns him to the 4th century A.D. If we are to believe the puranic allusion, we have to search for the beginning of the dynasty in the 3rd century A.D., and have to find out who were the predecessors of Varāharāja. In the present state of our knowledge, there are three schools of opinion as regards the beginning of the dynastic rule and the 1st king. Each of the schools is discussed here.

65. *Ibid.*, p. 50.

66. *E.I.*, Vol. V, pp. 24-36.

67. Majumdar, *Races and Culture of India*, p. 357.

68. Sukla, *Op.Cit.*, pp. 51-52.

69. Pargiter, *Op.Cit.*, p. 37.

70. Sahu, *Op.Cit.*, p. 572; Sukla, *Op.Cit.*, pp. 46-47; *I.H.Q.*, Vol. XXXVI, p. 25.

71. *J.N.S.I.*, Vol. I, pp. 25-35.

1. P. L. Misra⁷² is of the opinion that 'Mahendra' mentioned in the Allahabad pillar inscription was the earliest Nala king. According to him "he was a ruler of the South Kośala and is known to have been defeated by Emperor Samudragupta who reigned from C. 320 to 375 A.D. The records of the Nala dynasty show that this dynasty existed in the 4th/5th century A.D. as is also stated in the Purāṇas.

Since we know of no other dynasty except the Nalas ruling over this region in the 4th century A.D., Mahendravarman who was a contemporary of the Gupta emperor, must have belonged to this dynasty.⁷³ Elsewhere⁷⁴ he has stated that Mahendra of the Allahabad pillar *praśasti* is identical with king Mahendrāditya of the Kahirtal hoard of gold coins and the name Mahendravarman sounds well with some of the known Nala ruler viz. Bhavadaṭṭavarman and Skandavarman.

N. K. Sahu⁷⁵ has convincingly rejected his views and has noted that there is no use of 'Varman' after the name of Mahendra in the Allahabad *Praśasti* and Mahendrāditya is the same with Kumārgupta. The *purāṇas* categorically state that the descendants of Nala ruled over Niśadha which is same as Kāntāra and not Kośala. Pargiter⁷⁶ places the Nalas in the 3rd century A.D. and not in the 4th/5th century and hence Misra's view is not tenable. In fact Mahendra cannot be accepted as a Nala king.

2. N. K. Sahu⁷⁷ and S. N. Rajguru⁷⁸ have accepted "Vṛiśadhyaja" of the Bhita Seal No. 25⁷⁹ as the 1st Nala king on the evidence of the epithet "*Maheśvara-mahāsenāti Śriṣṭa-*

72. *I.H.Q.*, Vol. XXXVI, pp. 247-259.

73. *Ibid.*, p. 251.

74. *Ibid.*, Vol. XXXVII, pp. 2-40.

75. Sahu, *Op.Cit.*, pp. 508-9, Mahendraditya is also identified as a Sarabhapuriya king.

76. Pargiter, *Op.Cit.*, p. 51.

77. Sahu, *Op.Cit.*, pp. 50ff.

78. Rajguru, *Op.Cit.*, pp. 109ff.

79. *A.S.R.*, 1911-12, p. 51.

rājyavibhavaḥ" found on the seal in question. Similar epithet is also found in the Nala records which runs "*Mahāmaheśvara Mahāsenāti Śṛiṣṭa rājyavibhavaḥ*". The expression of the Nala records as well as that of the Bhita seal are strikingly so similar that we have every reason to accept him as a Nala king. D. C. Sircar⁸⁰ is also inclined to identify him as a Nala king. H. L. Sukla⁸¹, however, thinks that Vṛiṣadhvaḥ belonged to the Māgha family. His contention is that, 'Bhita' is near Allahabad in Bundelkhand region and Māghas were ruling over that territory, so the seal in question belonged to a Māgha king. His view is not tenable as we do not get any evidence to ascribe the seal to Māgha family. Moreover, the occurrence of matronymic expression, '*Gautamiputrasya*' on the seal definitely indicates that he belonged to the south⁸². We have, thus, logical ground to associate him with the Nala family and therefore, he may be regarded as one of the early Nala kings.

N. K. Sahu⁸³ places Vṛiṣadhvaḥ in the 2nd half of the 4th century A.D., which appears quite plausible. However, he has taken him as the 1st king of the Nala dynasty whereas I have accepted him as the 3rd in the line as the successor of Vyāghra-rāja. There will be violation of purāṇic evidence if Vṛiṣadhvaḥ is taken as the 1st king and therefore, the scholarly view of Sahu that Vṛiṣadhvaḥ was the earliest king of the dynasty may not be tenable.

3. H. L. Sukla⁸⁴ identifies Vyāghrarāja of Allahabad pillar inscription of Samudragupta as the 1st Nala king who was ruling over Kāntāra on the eve of his southern expedition. But, I find it difficult to regard him as the 1st ruler of the dynasty. No doubt, he was a contemporary of Samudragupta, but he was certainly not the founder of the Nala line. Because,

80. Sircar, *Classical Age*, Vol. III, p. 188.

81. Sukla, *Op.Cit.*, p. 54.

82. Sahu, *Op.Cit.*, p. 510.

83. *Ibid.*, p. 512.

84. Sukla. *Op.Cit.*, pp. 55-56.

if we accept him as the 1st Nala king then there will be violation of the Purāṇic evidence as propounded by Pargiter⁸⁵. Therefore, I am inclined to accept him as the 2nd king in the Nala genealogy as the successor of Śiśuka, the first monarch of the dynasty.

From the *Purāṇas*⁸⁶ we know that 'Śiśuka' contemporary of Vākāṭaka king Pravira i.e., Pravarasena-I, was the king of Purika⁸⁷ which has been identified with Puṣkari (i.e. modern Poḍāgaḍa), the capital of the Nalas. In the previous pages we have discussed about the contemporaneity of the rise of the Nalas and the Vākāṭakas in two adjacent territories in the Vindhyan region. Therefore, Śiśuka in all probability was the founder and the earliest king of the Nala dynasty who rose to power sometime in the 2nd half of the 3rd century A.D. right at Puṣkari, the original capital city of the Nalas at the heart of Bastar-Koraput-Kalahandi region, in the ancient Niṣadha or Kāntāra kingdom.

85. Pargiter, *Op.Cit.*, p. 51.

86. *Ibid.*, also see *Classical Age*, Vol. III, pp. 217-18.

87. G. Ramdas, *Op.Cit.*, p. 19.

IV

Political History

ŚĪŚUKA (C. 290-330 A.D.)

With the decline of the Sātavāhanas and the Kuśāṇas in the first half of the 3rd century A.D. many petty feudatories of the former regimes rose into power in the trans-Vindhyan region. The *Purāṇas*¹ like *Vāyu*, *Brahmāṇḍa*, *Bhaviṣya* and *Matsya* etc. which were compiled in the same epoch, mention of very many dynasties ruling over various parts of this region. Of these, the *Vāyu* and *Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇas*² enumerate a number of kings of various houses as ruling over Vidiśā in a very haphazard manner. After narrating the names of some Nāga kings and some other rulers of unknown dynasties they state, "when the family of the 'Śuṅgas'³ ends, Śīśunandi will reign. His younger brother was Nandiyāśa. In his lineage there will be three kings. His daughter's son 'Śīśuka' was king in 'Purika'. Vindhyaśakti's valiant son named 'Pravira' will enjoy the city Kanchanaka 60 years and will sacrifice with Vājapeya sacrifices replete with choice largesse. His four sons will be kings.⁴ From the statement it is clearly evident that 'Śīśuka' was not a king of Vidiśā and was contemporary of Pravira, the son of Vindhyaśakti, who also did not belong to the royal family of Vidiśā and

1. Pargiter, *The Purāṇa Text of the Dynasties of Kali Age*, pp. xii-xvii.

2. *Ibid.*, pp. 48-49.

3. Perhaps a mistake for 'Anga'.

4. *Ibid.*, p. 73.

was said to have been ruling from Kanchanaka somewhere near Nagpur region.⁵ Purika has been identified with Puškari, the capital of the Nalas. So 'Śiśuka' belonged to the Nala family and was the founder of the dynasty who ruled from the original Nala capital and was a contemporary of Vākāṭaka Pravarsena-I, who is believed to have started his rule sometime in the 2nd half of the 3rd century A.D.⁶ In the light of the above discussion we can tentatively attribute the rise of Śiśuka sometime in the last decade of 3rd century A.D., which strikingly corroborates the Puraṇic evidence that the progenies of Nala ruled over Niṣadha since the 3rd century A.D.

Like the early Vākāṭakas, he seems to have come to power from an humble beginning.⁷ His association with the royal family of Vidiśā through his mother indicates that he was an important king, for, at this juncture, Vidiśā was the paramount political centre. The occurrence of his name before Pravira in the *Purāṇa* gives the impression that he was a powerful king who laid the foundation of the Nala kingdom on solid ground over an extensive territory.

VYĀGHRARĀJA (C. 330-370 A.D.)

It has been elaborately discussed that 'Kāntāra' territory is definitely the same Niṣadha country⁸, where the Nalas ruled. Therefore, Vyāghrarāja of Kāntāra found mention in the Allahabad pillar *Praśasti* of Samudragupta was probably a Nala king and a contemporary of the Gupta monarch. V. V. Mirashi⁹ and H. L. Sukla¹⁰ are also inclined to accept him as a Nala king. However, wrongly some scholars identified him with the Uchchakalapa king, Vyāghra who was a feudatory of

5. D. C. Sircar, *Classical Age*, Vol. II, p. 218.

6. *Ibid.*, pp. 218-19.

7. See Chapter III.

8. *Ibid.*

9. Mirashi, *Madhya Pradesh Ka Vākāṭaka Rajvaṃś*, p. 166.

10. Sukla, *Prachina Bastar*, p. 58.

Vākāṭaka monarch Prithvīśena-II¹¹. From the Nachnaki-talai and Gunj inscriptions¹², 'Vyāghra' of Uchchakalpa family was known to have been ruling over Bundelkhand region which is apparently in the north, whereas Vyāghrarāja of the pillar inscription was a king of the south. So we have every reason to accept him as a Nala king, who appeared to have succeeded Śiśuka.

Possibly, the growing fortune of the Nalas in the south induced the great Gupta emperor to launch a gigantic expedition to that quarter even before finally subduing the north Indian kings. From the Allahabad pillar inscription¹³ it is known that Samudragupta subdued the North Indian kings in two phases, before and after his southern expedition. By a critical examination of the location and extent of Kāntāra with special reference to the views of the great Indologist we have shown that Vyāghrarāja's kingdom was far-flung stretching over the whole of the traditional Niṣadha country and as such it poses a potent danger to the budding and burgeoning Gupta imperial authority. So without delay, perhaps, before setting his conquest of the north, he marched to the south. In support of our contention the following statement of N. K. Sahu is worth noting. "Vyāghrarāja the king of the Mahākāntara gallantly fought with Samudragupta, but was ultimately defeated by him. If the tiger type coins, which depict the emperor Samudragupta as over-powering a tiger, be said to have represented this war, the victory over Vyāghrarāja was considered a very significant one by the emperor himself".¹⁴ Infact, his very name 'the tiger king' implies that he was a powerful king who ruled over a vast forest kingdom.

11. Sahu, *Utkal University History of Orissa*, Vol. I, pp. 432-33; Mirashi, *Studies in Indology*, Vol. II, pp. 173-174; Also see *I.H.C.* Vol. XXI, pp. 14-15.
12. *C.I.I.*, III, p. 233.
13. *Ibid.*, p. 3.
14. Sahu, *op.cit.*, p. 43.

On critical examination of Samudragupta's southern expedition, we notice some inconsistencies. For example, the route and the kingdoms of conquest have been presented in an unsystematic manner without any regard to their geographical positions. Secondly, the North Indian rulers were uprooted violently and the frontier kings were compelled to pay homage. But the South Indian Kings were strikingly reinstated in their respective kingdoms and were not required to render any obligation. This according to N. K. Sahu¹⁵ clearly indicates, "the suzerainty of Samudragupta did not extend over south India and the victorious achievement of the Gupta monarch in the territories south of the Vindhya as recorded in the Allahabad pillar inscription should be regarded as an exaggerated claim".

In this connection, J. Dubreuil¹⁶ and K. P. Jayaswal¹⁷ have also hinted about a possible emergence of a united opposition front of the southern potentates under someone. We are of the opinion that perhaps, the southerners were united under the ruling house of Vyāghrarāja of Kāntāra, which was a powerful kingdom with a vast territory. The wide circulation of varieties of gold coins by the successors of Vyāghrarāja very well testify to such a contention. Samudragupta's southern expedition was a military raid in gigantic scale and he passed like a hurricane and south India was never his permanent conquest. As soon as he returned back, south India regained and re-emerged under various houses. Vyāghrarāja sometime after 350 A.D. seems to have reigned in undiminished glory and no other Gupta monarch have ever dared to march into the South.

Following Samudragupta's retreat, the Māṭharas rose to power in the coastal belt of Orissa and Āndhra region and the Nalas held their undisputed sway over their north-west in the

15. Sahu, *op.cit.*, pp. 437-38.

16. Dubreuil, *Acient History of Deccan*, pp. 60-61.

17. Jayaswal, *History of India*, pp. 135-39.

Bastar-Koraput and Kalahandi region. Hence H. L. Sukla's¹⁸ opinion that Vyāghrarāja ruled as a feudatory king of Samudragupta is not tenable. It has been shown that South India was beyond the suzerainty of the Gupta monarchs. Some scholars like D. C. Sircar¹⁹ on the basis of wrong interpretation of the Sumandala copper plate grant of Mahārāja Dharmarāja, believed that over Kaliṅga and presumably over Kāntāra as well, Guptas had their sway as late as 570 A.D. This view cannot be accepted because the Imperial Guptas were definitely known to have been declined by 550 A.D.²⁰ Vyāghrarāja in all probability reigned in undiminished glory after his temporary discomfiture at the hands of Samudragupta.

VRIṢADHVAJA (C. 370-400 A.D.)

Vriṣadhvaja of Bhita Seal No. 25²¹ was very probably the son and successor of Vyāghrarāja. From the seal we know that he had assumed the dignified title of Mahārāja, which indicates that he was an independent ruler, perhaps with a big kingdom, stretching over the whole of the ancient Niṣadha or Kāntāra country. The find of his seal at Bhita near Allahabad has induced Rajguru²² to assume that his kingdom was extending upto Allahabad region. As has been suggested by Sahu²³ his territory did not extent upto Allahabad. Perhaps, the seal went in the train of Bhavadaṭṭavarman, who went to Allahabad either on pilgrimage or for marriage after his victorious occupation of Vākāṭaka capital Nandivardhan.

His capital was perhaps at Purika, i.e., Puṣkari. He appears to have a long rule of some thirty years. The wide circulation of gold coins by Varāharāja indicates that Variṣadhvaja left a

18. Sukla, *op.cit.*, p. 59.

19. *E.I.*, XXVIII, pp. 79-85.

20. N. K. Sahu, *op.cit.*, pp. 439-40.

21. *A S.R.*, 1911-12, p. 51.

22. Rajguru, *Inscription of Orissa*, Vol. I, Pt. II, p. 113.

23. Sahu, *op.cit.*, p. 510.

vast fortune to his successor. The high-sounding title of Mahārāja further testifies to his glorious rule. The epithet *Maheśvaramahāsenatiṣṭarāja vibhavaḥ* found on his seal indicates that he was a śaivite by faith.

VARĀHARĀJA (C. 400-435 A.D.)

From the Eḍengā gold coin hoard²⁴ we know Varāharāja as one of the early Nala kings and very probably, he was a successor of Vriṣadhvaḥ. There is absolutely no difficulty in identifying him as a Nala king since his coins were found in association with the coins of Arthapati and Bhavadaṭṭavarman, who are known to us from their epigraphs²⁵. However, there is difference of opinion as regards his date. We intend to assign him in the beginning of the 5th century A.D. on the basis of the characters of his coins.

Of the thirtytwo gold coins of the Eḍengā hoard, twenty-nine of three different sizes belong to Varāharāja. The large number and variety of gold coins issued by him testify to his flourishing rule. N. K. Sahu²⁶ is of the opinion that, prior to him, the Nalas were subordinate to the Vākāṭakas and it was Varāharāja, who proclaimed independence and rose to great prominence. However, we find it difficult to agree with him since we know that Vriṣadhvaḥ, his predecessor had the royal title 'Mahārāja'. Further, in the Vākāṭaka records we do not find any direct evidence that the Nalas have been subdued by the Vākāṭakas. Therefore, we have every reason to regard him as an independent king with grandeur and glory. It is rather probable that taking advantage of the confusion that followed the death of Rudrasena-II during the regency of Prabhavatigupta he attempted to extend his empire at cost of the Vākāṭakas

24. *J.N.S.I.*, Vol. I, pp. 25-35. Mirashi is also inclined to assign him in this period.

25. *Rithapur, Kesaribeqā grants*.

26. Sahu, *op.cit.*, p. 513.

The opinion of Hiralal Sukla²⁷ that Varāharāja was defeated by Vākāṭaka king Narendrasena who snatched away portions of his territory is untenable since there is no basis for such a contention.

From the figure of the humped bull embossed on his coins, it is apparent that Varāharāja was Śaivite by faith. There was economic prosperity and happiness in his kingdom.

BHAVADATṬAVARMAN (C. 435-465 A.D.)

With the accession of Bhavadaṭṭavarman the history of Nalas became prominent and their empire witnessed its meteoric rise. In the struggle for supremacy in the trans-Vindhyan region, the Nalas emerged as victorious. The Vākāṭaka kingdom was violently consigned to terrible onslaught. For long years, the Nala empire thrived with occasional reverses at the hands of the Vākāṭakas. Nevertheless, finally the Vākāṭakas perished by the beginning of the 6th century A.D. but the Nalas survived, shifting their sphere of intensified activities to the North-East of their kingdom. From the available records, we get a clear picture of their prosperous rule and regime during this period, which is full of activities and achievements, both political and cultural. This glorious epoch can verily be regarded as the golden age and high watermark of Nala regime. Bhavadaṭṭavarman perhaps, a son and successor of Varāharāja seems to have laid the foundation of the Nala kingdom, on solid grounds, and embarked upon a policy of vigorous and aggressive aggrandisement.

Bhavadaṭṭavarman is known from his Rithapur Great²⁸ issued from Nandivardhan in his 11th regnal year as well as from the Poḍāgaḍa stone inscription²⁹ of his second son Skandavarman. His name also finds mention on one coin

27. Sukla, *op.cit.*, p. 59.

28. *E.I.*, Vol. XIX, pp. 100-104.

29. *Ibid.*, Vol. XXI, pp. 153-157.

of Eḍengā hoard³⁰ as well as on two coins of Kulia hoard³¹. Thus he is widely known from many records and appears by far, to be the greatest monarch of the glorious Nala family.

There is some controversy among the scholars as regards his correct name and position in the genealogical list of the Nalas. In the Rithapur grant his name has been written as Bhavaṭṭavarman and in the Poḍāgaḍa stone inscription it reads 'Bhavadaṭṭa'. Y. R. Gupte who edited the former grant is of the opinion that Bhavaṭṭa is a prakritised form of Bhavadaṭṭa. The name of the donee Durgadaṭṭa and Devadaṭṭa have been written, in the similar way, as Durgaṭṭa and Devaṭṭa and in the latter, the letter 'da' has been added below later on³². So it is definite that his proper name is Bhavadaṭṭavarman, which is further corroborated by the occurrence of his name as 'Śri Bhavadaṭṭarājasya' on the coins of both Kulia and Eḍengā hoards. The Rithapur grant is interestingly made at Prayāg (on the confluence of the Gangā and the Jamunā) by Mahārāja Bhavadaṭṭavarman and was subsequently issued by Arthapati apparently his son. Y. R. Gupte³³, however, wrongly takes Arthapati as an epithet of king Bhavadaṭṭavarman and calls the donor as "Mahārāja Bhaṭṭaraka Arthapati Bhavaṭṭavarman" which is untenable.

There is also controversy as regards his date. He very probably succeeded Varāharāja about 435 A.D. and had a glorious and eventful reign of some 30 years upto 465 A.D. Taking advantage of the chaotic conditions that followed the death of Rudrasena-II and the regency of Prabhavatigupta³⁴ Varāharāja perhaps extended his kingdom at the cost of the Vākāṭakas.

30. *J.N.S.I.*, Vol. I, pp. 29-35.

31. *Prāchya Partibhā*, Vol. V, pp. 69-74; *J.N.S.I.*, Vol. XI, Pt. I-II, pp. 108-113.

32. *E.I.*, XIX, pp. 101ff.

33. *Ibid.*

34. Sircar, *Classical Age*, Vol. III, pp. 178-184.

With the accession of his energetic son Bhavadaṭṭavarman a tense situation seems to have prevailed in the political history of the trans-Vindhyan region. The Vākāṭaka king Pravarasena-II perceiving the tense political situation seems to have organised his kingdom and alerted his *Sanāpatīs*³⁵ by assigning them them different parts of his territory. He is also said to have founded another capital town, called Pravaraपुरा. All these drastic changes were made by him for the security of his kingdom, and for checking the growing menace of the Nalas, and strikingly he was successful in his attempt. So long he was alive nothing untoward happened and he had a long years of peaceful rule. Once the strong hand of Pravarasena was removed about 440 A.D., Bhavadaṭṭavarman, who was in search of an opportunity, started the role of an aggressor. The Vākāṭaka empire under Narendrasena (C. 440-470 A.D.) passed through a period of trial. It is amply evident from the Rithapur grant of Bhavadaṭṭavarman that he defeated Narendrasena and occupied Nandivardhan the Vākāṭaka capital (C. 445-450 A.D.)³⁶. Narendrasena could not withstand his attack and fled from his capital which remained in possession of Bhavadaṭṭavarman for a considerable period. Taking advantage of this Nala occupation of the heart of the Vākāṭaka kingdom, the Traikuṭakas revolted and assumed independence under Dhārasena (C. 450-470 A.D.).

After the victory he consolidated his position right at the capital of the Vākāṭakas. He then proceeded to Prayāg, the place blessed by *Prajāpati* where he announced the donation of the village Kadambagiri as an *agrāhāra* to the Brāhmaṇa Mātrādhyāryya of the *Parāśaragotra* and to his eight sons (all specified by their names with libation of water for the felicitation and welfare of his conjugal (*dāmpatya*) life.

35. Sircar, *op.cit.*, pp. 131-32.

36. Sahu, Mirashi also place the date of invasion of Bhavadaṭṭa between 445-450 A.D.; Sahu, *op.cit.*, pp. 513-14; Mirashi, *Madhya Pradesh ka Vākāṭaka Rajvams*, p. 116.

The charter was composed on the oral instruction of the king by his confidential officer "Chula" in the year eleven³⁷. From the colophon portion of the grant it is apparent that perhaps he died before actually issuing it. "This copper plate charter which is the abode of the virtue of increasing the sacred fame of his father and mother, has been caused to be made by the illustrious *Mahārāja* Arthapati Bhaṭṭaraka who has been favoured by the kindness of respectable people, so that it may last undisturbed of the eight sons, enduring with the sun and moon. May there be prosperity to cows, Brāhmaṇas and subject : May there be success : Engraved by Boppādeva, the son's son of Pāddopādhyā"³⁸. Due to unknown reasons the grant could not be issued by him, so his son and successor Arthapati issued it, perhaps from the same Nandivardhan. This also gives a political insight that he had shifted his political activities to Nandivardhan and donated land grant right in the Vākāṭaka kingdom as is evident from the location of the donated village Kadambagiri. So long he was alive, Narendrasena could not do anything. Probably, he took shelter in the Kadamba kingdom, wherefrom he had married.

At this juncture the integrity of Gupta empire was rudely shaken by the Puṣyamitras and Huṇa invasion. So Kumāragupta could not come to the rescue of the Vākāṭaka. He was subsequently killed and his successor Skandagupta was although troubled by the barbarous Huṇas. The Traikūṭaka revolt added fuel to the tottering fire of the Vākāṭaka regime.

On the way of his victorious march onto Allahabad, he appeared to have conquered the kingdom of the Meghas, that extended over Bilaspur, and Sambalpur regions. The contention seems very plausible since we do not find any of the ruler of Megha family after Mahendra and Riṣabhadeva³⁹.

37. It is not clear whether the 11th year means 11th year of his reign or occupation of Nandivardhan.

38. *E.I.*, XIX, p. 104.

39. See Chapter II.

B. V. Krishnarao⁴⁰ is of the opinion that Narendrasena was killed in the Nala attack. This view appears quite untenable, for, in the epigraphic records of his son⁴¹, Narendrasena has been described to have recovered his family's fortune from an enemy's hold. This very probably refers to his recovery of Nandivardhan from the Nalas. The view of Sircar⁴² that it perhaps refers to his success against the vassals of the Guptas is not tenable. There is no doubt that after the death of Bhavadatṭavarman he regained his kingdom, perhaps, with the help of Kādambas. The Keśaribeḍā plate of Arthapati, the son and successor of Bhavadatṭa, issued from Puṣkari in his 6th regnal year amply testifies that following the death of Bhavadatṭavarman, he retreated to Puṣkari the original Nala capital and Nandivardhan was recovered by Narendrasena. His command is said to have been honoured by the king of Kośāla, Mekhalā and Mālava⁴³. This claim, however, seems to be exaggerated one. But it is probable that he drove out the Nalas from his capital and part of his territories⁴⁴. The opinion of Krishnarao that Prithvisena-II liberated Nandivardhan is not tenable.

During the last part of his reign for about 10 years the Vākāṭaka empire was overrun by Bhavadatṭavarman and his empire extended from Yeotmal Taluq region of Berar to Bilaspur and Koraput region. The speculation of some scholars that his empire extended from Berar to Allahabad wherefrom he made the Rithapur grant is untenable, for, it is the well-known fact that donations are sometimes made for acquiring excessive religious merit at the exceptionally holy places like Prayāga or Benaras. The Nala territory under him, stretching

40. Krishnarao, *Early Dynasties of Andhradesa*, p. 664.

41. Sircar, *op.cit.*, p. 184.

42. *Ibid.*

43. *Ibid.* Also see Balaghat plates, E.I., Vol. IX, p. 27; Mirashi, *Studies in Indology*, Vol. II, p. 172.

44. Altekar also thinks that Narendrasena drove away Nalas from his Capital. *A New History of Indian People*, Vol. VI, pp. 93-123.

from Berar to Bilaspur and Koraput, can rightly be termed as an empire. It is a glorious achievement of Bhavadaṭṭavarman and the Poḍāgaḍa stone inscription records in glowing term that he was the foremost scion of the glorious Nala family, who repelled enemies by his fired valour.

Capital

The original capital of the Nalas was Puṣkari i.e. modern Poḍāgaḍa⁴⁵ and apparently Bhavadaṭṭavarman ruled from this place until his occupation of Nandivardhan sometime between 445-450 A.D., when he shifted his political activities to the later place. Till his death (i.e. upto 465 A.D.) Nandivardhan, the traditional Vākāṭaka capital became the seat of the imperial authority of the Nalas. There is difference of opinion about the location of Nandivardhan. Hiralal identifies it with Nagardhan 13 miles north of Nagpur while Y. R. Gupte⁴⁶ equates Nandivardhan with Nandpur, 34 miles away of Nagpur, which according to him is a good camping ground. B. V. Krishnarao⁴⁷ and N. K. Sahu⁴⁸ support the later identification. In fact, Nandapur⁴⁹ on the bank of the river, Śivanāth appears to be the site of Nandivardhan. Nagardhan may be identified with "Pravarapura" the second capital of the Vākāṭakas, founded by Pravarasena-II.

Queen Achali Bhattārikā

Interestingly, the name of the Queen of Bhavadaṭṭavarman finds prominence in the Rithapur grant.

"Mama chāchapi(pi) (Achali) Bhattārikāsyā

Dāmpatya(Dampya)tasya svamala manu gruhatyām"⁵⁰

45. Altekar, *op.cit.*, p. 114.

46. *E.I.*, Vol. XIX, p. 102.

47. Krishnarao, *op.cit.*, p. 659.

48. Sahu, *op.cit.*, p. 508.

49. Also called Nandgaon, Nandur.

50. *E.I.*, Vol. XIX, p. 202, Also see Sukla, *op.cit.*, p. 6263.

Bhavadaṭṭavarman visited Prayāga apparently on pilgrimage with his queen and orally donated Kadambagiri *grāma* to Matradhyāryya of the *Parāśar gotra* and to his eight sons viz. Devarāryya, Devadāṭṭaryya, Kumārdāṭṭaryya, Viradāṭṭaryya, Vasudāṭṭaryya, Gauridāṭṭaryya, Dhruvadaṭṭaryya and Durggathāryya, for the blessing of the matrimonial (*dāmpatya*) relationship of himself and his queen Achali Bhaṭṭārikā with libation of water right at the confluence of the Gangā and the Yamunā, the place blessed by Brahmā (*Prajāpati Praśāda Siddha Kṣetra*)⁵¹. D. C. Sircar's⁵² view that the grant may also have been made on the occasion of the Nala king's marriage with a princess of the Allahabad region may not be tenable. It appears that she hailed from an influential royal family perhaps the Guptas or the Mātharas, from whom Bhavadaṭṭavarman might have received immense help in his expedition against the Vākātakas. From the Bhaṭṭārikā title, it is clear that she was the chief queen of Mahārāja Bhavadaṭṭavarman.

Royal Title

The conspicuous royal title of Mahārāja Bhavadaṭṭavarman recorded in the copper plate grant is as follows :

*“Maheśvara mahāsenāti sṛiṣṭa rājya vibhavaḥ
Nalanṛpa varṇśa prasutaḥ,
Tripatākādhvajah śrimahārāja Bhavadattavarmah”.*

The title Śri-Mahārāja indicates that he was a great monarch, born in the race of Nala king. His flag was ‘tripatākā’ i.e. flag with three outstretched fingers or pennons. The expression,

“*Maheśvara mahāsenāti sṛiṣṭa rājya vibhavaḥ*” has given rise to much controversy. Y. R. Gupte⁵³ interprets it as “upon whom has been bestowed the glory of royalty by Maheśvara

51. *Ibid.*, pp. 103-104.

52. Sircar, *op.cit.*, p. 188.

53. *E.I.*, Vol. XIX, p. 104.

(Śīva) and Mahāsenā (Kārtikeya)". D. C. Sircar⁵⁴ accepts this interpretation. Rajguru⁵⁵ translates it as "who bestowed the glory of royalty, upon the great Lord Mahāsenā" (Kārtikeya). Elsewhere⁵⁶ Rajguru, while discussing the same title of the Bhīta Seal No. 25 of Nala king Vriṣadhvaṇa, writes "Mahāsenā was a title used by the king of Ujjayini, as described by Bhāṣa in his Sanskrit Drama *Svapnavāsavadattā*". Accordingly I presume that the Nalas were presented with a prosperous portion of their kingdom by Maheśvara Mahāsenā, who was a king of Ujjayini, either as dowry or reward." This interpretation seems like poetic imagination and is certainly untenable. Marshall⁵⁷ suggests. "it seems to indicate that in ancient times there may have existed a pious custom, according to which rulers on the occasion of their accession entrusted their kingdoms to their *Iṣṭa-devatā* and considered themselves as mere agents". The interpretation appears to be very sound but it does not explain why instead of dedicating the kingdom to one God the Nalas dedicated their royalty to Śīva and Skanda Kartikeya. G. Ramdas⁵⁸ interprets the expression in a still more peculiar way and says, "Rājya means the administration of the country, *vibhavaḥ* means the supreme authority to administer a kingdom. The whole expression means (who has) created the supreme authority of administration of the kingdom with such officers as Maheśvara and Mahāsenā". As pointed out by N. K. Sahu⁵⁹, Ramdas has taken the term '*Atiṣṭiṣṭa*' which means bestowed as equivalent to *Sriṣṭa* which again means created and that is why his rendering becomes incorrect. The suggestion of V. V. Mirashi⁶⁰ that Maheśvara and Mahāsenā the generalissimo, seems to be more plausible and N. K. Sahu also supports this view. Thus,

54. Sircar, *op cit.*, pp. 188-190.

55. Rajguru, *Inscriptions of Orissa*, Vol. I, Pt. II, p. 92.

56. *Ibid.*, p. 110.

57. *A.S.R.*, 1911-12, p. 51.

58. *J.B.R.S.*, XXXIV, I-II, p. 37-39.

59. Sahu and Others, *History of Orissa*, pp. 76-77.

60. *J.N.S.I.*, Vol. I, pp. 29-35.

apparently Bhavadaṭṭavarman was a devout worshipper of Śiva and Skanda Kārtikeya.

Coins

Up till now, three coins of Bhavadaṭṭavarman have come to light. The one coin of Edengā hoard is described by Mirashi⁶¹ in the following words : "Inside a circle of dots along the edge a couchant humped bull is facing right, and the crescent behind it, below, the legend Śri Bhavadaṭṭarājasya in the box headed characters of the 5th century A.D." According to him the figure of the bull is very beautifully executed, especially on his coin. In the Kulia hoard⁶² we have two coins of Bhavadaṭṭarāja with similar device and legend. The wide circulation of the gold coins by him also testifies to his prosperous reign. The find-spot of the coins, one in Durg district and the other ones in Bastar district also, gives the impression of the extent of his empire.

Religion

It is clearly evident from the *Nandi* representation on his coins and the epithet,

"*Maheśvara mahāsenāti sṛiṣṭa rājya vibhavaḥ*" that he was a devotee of Śiva and Skandakārtikeya and a Śaivite by faith. He believed to have obtained royal fortune by the grace of Kārtikeya and Śiva, which he even incorporated in his royal charter. Like the Vākāṭakas the Nalas were also devout worshippers of Śiva and Kārtikeya. We get reference to the worship of 'Mahābhairava' aspect of Śiva by the Vākāṭakas. But by contrast the Nalas seem to be the worshipper of Śiva's benevolent aspect. His sacred dip in the confluence of the Gangā and the Yamunā with his wife, donating land grant to Brahmins with libation of water indicates the high sense of his religious consciousness.

61. *Ibid.*

62. *Prāchya Pratibhā*, Vol. V, p. 72.

Administration

He seems to have introduced a benign administrative system, with a hierarchy of officers⁶³. Chulla known from the Rithapur grant was a confidential officer as well as a composer. Pādo-pādhyā and Voppādeva were royal engravers. Various types of taxes like custom and land taxes were collected. His military forces mostly consisted of foot and horse soldiers as is evident from the grant. The villages and the kingdom seem to have been measured by a unit of measurement called 'Nivartana'. The donated village of the Rithapur grant Kadambagiri measured 10 nivartana in extent. Each village in his regime appears to have fruit gardens. Disobedience of the royal orders was considered sinful. His empire was divided into 'rājya' (a division of kingdom) apparently into provinces and rājya into Viṣayas i.e., districts. What was the empire was called is not known. It is possible that his empire was called Sāmarājya, since rājya mentioned in his grant refers to a part of his kingdom. Above all he was a believer in divine origin of kingship. He ruled the state as the lieutenant of perhaps Kārtikeya. Sanskrit was the court language. His officers like Chulla were well versed in the Sanskrit language. The script of his land was the Brāhmi of the box-headed variety.

Neighbours

The Traikuṭakas were his western neighbour. Previously they were under the subjugation of the Vākātakas. Bhavadaṭṭa's occupation of Nandivardhan helped them to free themselves from the Vākāṭaka yoke and Dhārasena became independent sometime after 450 A.D. It is probable that Bhavadaṭṭa liberated them⁶⁴. In the north-east the Guptas were his neighbour. After Samudragupta, they never ventured to turn their eyes to the south. Achali Bhaṭṭārikā might have been a Gupta

63. Also see Chapter on Administration ; Sukla, *op.cit.*, p. 60.

64. Sukla, *op.cit.*, p. 60.

princess⁶⁵. In the south-west the Viṣṇukuṇḍins were his neighbours. In the south of his kingdom the Māṭharas were the masters. Śaktivarman and Ananta Śaktivarman of Kaliṅga were his contemporaries. Perhaps he had friendly relations with them.

Estimate

By far Bhavadaṭṭavarman was the greatest Nala emperor with an extensive empire of his own conquest. He extended the boundary of the traditional kingdom far and wide from Berar in Maharastra to Belkhandi region of Orissa. As a warrior he was invincible. So long he was alive, the Vākātakas the traditional enemies of the Nalas were rendered helpless and their capital became his centre of political activities. He was a profound administrator, who introduced an excellent administrative system with a hierarchy of officials. In his dominion religion occupied an outstanding position in the state and society. The ruler and the ruled had the fear of sin for their wrong deeds and they seem to have the desire for acquiring religious merit by donation of grants and performance of good deeds. He had a beautiful and fortified capital at Puṣkari, which as is evident from the ruins, was well planned with temples and tanks and orchards and gardens. Some of the ruined monuments of Puṣkari could be assigned to him who was the real founder of the Nala empire. In recognition of his profound contribution to the Nala family, his name finds mention prominently in the Poḍāgaḍa stone inscription of his son Skandavarman. The present name "Bhaṇḍāriguḍā" of ancient Puṣkari, is perhaps reminiscent of the illustrious name of Bhavadaṭṭa, whose sweet memory the people cherished. Poḍāgaḍa, the hill fort is at the centre of Puṣkari and the capital city extended over miles in every direction from this place. The city on the bank of the eternal rivulet 'Singāri' located amidst a kalaeodoscopic and jungle ambience may have been a

65. *Ibid.*, p. 70.

wonderful city of his age. The river Amarāli that flows in the vicinity of the past glorious city probably represents the memory of Achali Bhaṭṭarikā, his chief queen.

The history and culture of the Nalas reached its apex under his hagemony and people lived merrily in his prosperous kingdom. His celebrated son befittingly records his name in his grant as the foremost scion of the glorious Nala family.

ARTHAPATI (C. 465-480)

Mahārāja Arthapati Bhaṭṭāraka succeeded his father Bhavadattavarman sometime about 464 A.D. There is difference of opinion among scholars about his position in the Nala genealogy as well as chronology. D. C. Sircar⁶⁶ regards him as the grandson of Bhavadaṭṭa and S. N. Rajguru⁶⁷ identifies him as the father of the former and G. Ramdas⁶⁸ identifies Arthapati as the grand-father of Bhavadattavarman. He has been identified as the elder son and successor of Bhavadattavarman by V. V. Mīrashi and N. K. Sahu⁶⁹. I also accept their views.

Mahārāja Arthapati is known to us from his Keśaribeḍā grant⁷⁰ and Rithapur plates⁷¹ of his father, as well as from the Eḍengā⁷² and Kulia⁷³ hoard of gold coins discovered in M.P. Thus we have plenty of records to study his history. Unfortunately, scholars and historians have underestimated him for, he retreated from the Vākāṭaka capital Nandivardhan after the death of his father and since one copper plate charter of his 7th regnal year is available to us. But his gold coins in two hoards, one in Durg district and the other one in Bastar dis-

66. *E.I.*, XXVIII, pp. 13-17; Sircar, *op.cit.*, p. 111.

67. Rajguru, *op.cit.*, p. 111.

68. *J.B.R.S.*, XXXIV, 1-2, pp. 35-36.

69. Sahu, *op.cit.*, p. 512.

70. *Ibid.*, XXXIV, pp. 33-42; *E.I.*, XXVIII, pp. 13-17.

71. *E.I.*, XIX, pp. 100-104.

72. *J.N.S.I.*, *ibid.*

73. *Ibid.*, XL, pp. 108-110; *Prāchya Pratibhā*, V. Pt. I, pp. 69-74.

strict testify to his prosperous rule over an extensive empire. In fact, Arthapati was not such a petty and powerless king with a small kingdom as is generally thought of. In the preceding pages we have said that, following the death of Bhavadaṭṭavarman, Narendrasena, who was spending his days in exile, probably in the court of the Kādambas, succeeded in recovering his ancestral capital from the Nalas apparently from Arthapati. The opinion of N. K. Sahu⁷⁴, B. V. Krishnarao⁷⁵ and following him H. L. Sukla⁷⁶ and D. K. Ganguli⁷⁷ that Prithvīsenā-II drove out Arthapati from Nandivardhan and subsequently killed him sometime immediately after his 7th regnal year, is not tenable. For, we know from the Vākātaka record⁷⁸ that Narendrasena recovered his family's fortune from an enemy's hold. Even it is said that his commands were honoured by the kings of Kośala, Mekhalā and Mālava⁷⁹. Thus we have evidence to say that Narendrasena himself managed to drive away Arthapati from the Vākātaka capital sometime after 465 A.D. In the present state of our knowledge it is difficult to say what kind of political influence, he had over Kośala and Mekhalā etc. and the claim appears to be exaggerated one⁸⁰. The find of the coins of Arthapati at Kuliā in Durg district alongwith the coins of Bhavadaṭṭa and two other Nala rulers Śrīstambha and Nandanarāja testifies to his sway in those areas even after his retreat from Nandivardhan. Between 465-470 A.D. Narendrasena ruled in the Berar region and Arthapati ruled in undiminished glory, with an extensive kingdom from the original Nala capital Puṣkari. It was only after the accession

74. Sahu, *op.cit.*, pp. 513-14.

75. Krishnarao, *op.cit.*, p. 665.

76. Sukla, *op.cit.*, pp. 63-65.

77. Ganguli, *Historical Geography and Dynastic-History of Orissa*, pp. 258-9.

78. Sircar, *op.cit.*, p. 184.

79. *Ibid.*

80. *Ibid.*

of Prithvīsenā-II sometime after 470 A.D. Arthapati really suffered some reverse and perhaps died in the encounter.

The high-sounding title of his Keśaribedā grant 'Sri Mahārāja Arthapati Bhaṭṭāraka' testifies that at his 7th regnal year, he was reigning from Puṣkari with great fame. The Bhaṭṭāraka title is generally applied to great kings and we know that Chandragupta-II-Vikramāditya had assumed the Bhaṭṭāraka title⁸¹. He was also adorned with the traditional Nala epithet.

*"Maheśvara Mahāsenātisriṣṭa rājya vibhavaḥ
tripatākādhvajah nala nripati kulāvaya"*.

as gleaned from his grant⁸². At Puṣkari he had a peaceful reign. The Vākātakas had been subjugated in the north-west of his kingdom by his father and they were yet to recover from the shock of the Nala inundation. Arthapati seems to have been a man of peaceful disposition unlike his father.

His Keśaribedā grant⁸³ records the donation of Keśelaka grāma which he made in his 7th regnal year, with libation of water to last till the end of the moon and stars to Durgārya, Ravirārya, Ravidattārya and Mātrārya to be enjoyed for generations (*Putra-pautrikam*). The donees were of *Kautsasa gotra*. The land was made free of fees and taxes and they should not be said anything by anybody. They were asked to start the work of cultivation and live with no anxiety and they were to do duties pertinent to the *viśaya*. If anybody either by anger or avarice, did any harm to the village, he would fall with great sins into the five kings of hell. The charter was written at the king's personal orders by "Chulla" the private secretary (*rahasyādhikṛita*). It is reported by Ramdas⁸⁴ that the inscription ended with a sword mark. The village Keśelaka of the grant has been identified with the present village Keśaribedā the find-spot of the grant, in the Umarkot taluq of Koraput

81. Sukla, *op.cit.*, p. 64.

82. *J.B.R.S.*, XXXIV, I-II, pp. 33-42.

83. *Ibid.*

84. *Ibid.*

district and is located at a distance of 25 km. to the north-west of Puṣkari near the source of the river Tel.

The site is full of relics and ruins (Fig. 8) with an ancient tank nearby ascribable to 5th century A.D. The revenue village "Andhri" very close to Kesaribeḍā, perhaps represents the memory of the king Arthapati, and its name owes its origin to him.

The grant was made for his pleasure and satisfaction to the said Brāhmaṇas from whom perhaps he got some help⁸⁵.

From the Poḍāgaḍa stone inscription⁸⁶ of his successor Skandavarman it is known that he repaired and repopulated the devastated city of Puṣkari. It is very probable that Prithvī-sena-II who succeeded his father Narendrasena in the Vākāṭaka dynasty attacked Puṣkari and overwhelmed Mahārāja Arthapati in about 480 A.D. Arthapati was not a good warrior and he could not withstand the Vākāṭaka attack under the turbulent Prithvī-sena. He seemed to have avenged Nala occupation of Vākāṭaka kingdom. In the Bālaghat records⁸⁷ of Prithvī-sena-II it is noted that he retrieved twice the fallen fortunes of his family. D.C. Sircar⁸⁸ is of the opinion that, though it is not known definitely the nature of catastrophies referred to in his claims, it probably refers to Prithvī-sena's struggle with Harisena of Vatsgulma and Bhavadaṭṭavarman of the Nala family. N. K. Sahu⁸⁹ opines that the enemies of Prithvī-sena were Traikuṭaka king Dhārasena and the Nala king Arthapatirāja. To us the later contention appears to be correct.

Estimate

As a warrior Arthapatirāja ended in failure. He inherited a vast empire from his father but he could not maintain it. He

85. *E.I.*, XXVIII, p. 15.

86. *Ibid.*, XXI, pp. 153-57.

87. *E.I.*, XXIV, p. 52; *E.I.*, IV, p. 67ff; Sircar, *op cit.*, p. 184.

88. Sircar, *Ibid.*

89. Sahu, *op.cit.*, pp. 514-15; Also see *History of Orissa*, pp. 76-77,

fell fighting defending the independence of his country in the heroic tradition of his glorious family. Major portion of his father's empire from Durg to Kalahandi was, however, under his undisputed sway and he seemed to have ruled over it with glory till the last part of his reign, when he met the tragic end of his career by the sudden attack of Vākātaka Prithvīśena. Like his father he was a benign administrator but unlike him he was peaceful in disposition. He seems to have been a very religious-minded person who had respect for Brahmins and cows. He was a worshipper of Maheśvara and Mehāśena, who dedicated his kingdom at their feet and ruled the state as their lieutenant. His insignia was *tripatākā*. He had respect for his *āryaka* i.e. forefathers. From the find of his gold coins at Kulia and Eḍengā, it is apparent that there was economic prosperity in his kingdom. Inside a circle of dots along the edge a couchant humped bull is facing right with crescent in front, below the legend 'Śri Arthapatirājasya' in horizontal line in the box-headed charter is found on the obverse of his coins. The coins are of repousee variety. His capital was at Puškari. Sanskrit was his court language. He was a patron of learning and literature. He patronised scholars and officers like Chulla, the composer of Rithapur and Keśaribeḍā grants.

SKANDAVARMAN (C. 480-515 A.D.)

Skandavarman⁹¹, the younger son of Bhavadatṭa and brother of Arthapatirāja ascended the Nala throne at Puškari, following the tragic death of the latter on the eve of the attack of Vākātaka Prithvīśena-II. At this critical juncture, Skandavarman exhibited exceptional courage and valour and repelled the invading army of the Vākātakas and within no time he could retrieve and repopulate the deserted Nala capital city. Unlike his brother, Arthapathirāja he was a great warrior of his time, who enhanced the glory of his family by his spectacular

90. *Ibid.*

91. Mirashi suggests the reading Śri Arthavarman.

and successful military activities. Skandavarman is known to us from his Poḍāgaḍa stone inscription⁹². The grant has been issued in his 12th regnal year from the capital city of Puṣkari. The inscription consists of thirteen verses, most of which are composed in *Anuṣṭupa* *chhānda*⁹³, unlike the previous Nala grants which were written in prose diction. The epigraph records the foundation of a foot print (*Pādamula*) of Viṣṇu by the king Skandavarman and the donation of some holdings to Chakradroṇa for the maintenance of the temple. It begins with the "glorification of Hari in his aspects as the essence of victory".⁹⁴

"Harinā jitaṁ jayati Jesyatisā

Guṇastutin(hisa)manu bhagavāneva"//

Verses 2-3 read "this foot print or sanctuary was made by the illustrious king Skandavarman, the noble son of king Bhavadatṭa, who was the foremost scion of the glorious Nala family and repelled his enemies by his valour, on having reclaimed the lost royal prosperity, which had fallen into others hand or was unsettled and having repeopled the deserted (*śunya*) town of Puṣkari, with the hope of obtaining religious merit for his father, other ancestors and mother and desiring welfare for himself".⁹⁵

This portion of the grant has such political implication. Scholars are not unanimous in their identification of the enemy who ravaged the Nala capital and whom Bhavadatṭavarman repelled. Let us examine their contentions. D. C. Sircar⁹⁶ believes that probably the invader of Puṣkari was either Pāṇḍu-vaṁśī king Nanna of South Kośala, whose occupation of the whole of the western Madhya Pradesh is indicated by an inscription at Bhaṇḍaka in Chanda district, or most probably the enemy was the Chalukya king Kīrtivarman-I (567-97 A.D.).

92. *E.I.*, XXI, pp. 153-57.

93. *Ibid.*

94. *Ibid.*, p. 154.

95. *Ibid.*

96. Sircar, *Classical Age*, Vol. III, p. 189.

This view of the learned scholar is not tenable since Kīrtivarman flourished much later and the Pāṇḍuvarṁśī king had their sway in the eastern part of Kośala whereas the Nalas had their authority in the south. The opinion of B. V. Krishnarao⁹⁷ that "Harisena seemed to have destroyed Skandavarman and broken up the power of the Nalas" is equally untenable. N. K. Sahu⁹⁸ and H. L. Sukla⁹⁹ rightly think that the enemy was Prithvisena-II the Vākāṭaka king of the main branch. But Prithvisena failed diametrically to crush the Nala power and Skandavarman hurled back the Vākāṭakas and restored and repopulated the capital city, Puṣkari, which had been deserted or made *śunya*. Thus the claim of Skandavarman was not a mere boast. Even it is believed by Sukla¹⁰⁰ and elsewhere by B. V. Krishnarao¹⁰¹ that Skandavarman after the death of Prithvisena marched against the Vākāṭakas and perhaps defeated and overawed Devasena and threatened the very existence of the Vākāṭaka empire. According to Krishnarao "Skandavarman was a mighty warrior who acquired great power and kingdom. His own dominions lay apparently in the heart of the Vākāṭaka empire. His great military strength which was acquired in a short time, proved a menace to the Vākāṭaka suzerainty and finally compelled the weak Devasena to abdicate the throne in favour of his energetic son Harisena, in order that the empire might be saved from disintegration". Of course we do not have any direct evidence to prove that he attacked and occupied Vākāṭaka dominion. But from his records it is evident that he successfully drove away Vākāṭaka Prithvisena from the Nala capital and territories and repaired the '*bhraṣṭa*' (devastated)

97. B. V. Krishnarao, *op.cit.*, p. 665, Harisena ruled from Vatsagulma country which comprised of Vidarbha and extended from the Narmada in the north to Godavari in the south; Mirashi, *Studies in Indology*, Vol. II, p. 163.

98. Sahu, *op.cit.*, p. 514; *History of Orissa*, p. 77.

99. Sukla, *op.cit.*, p. 66.

100. *Ibid.*

101. Krishnarao, *op.cit.*, p. 665.

capital city. After this incident he seems to have a glorious reign upto about 515 A.D.

The views of N. K. Sahu¹⁰² and B. V. Krishnarao¹⁰³ that Harisena the Vākāṭaka king of the Basim branch destroyed Skandavarman and broke up the Nala power is unacceptable. In this connection the views of D. C. Sircar¹⁰⁴ appears most plausible. In the Ajantā inscription¹⁰⁵ it is recorded that Harisena had his influence in Kuntala, Avantī, Kalinga, Kośala, Trikuṭa, Lāṭa, Āndhra and other territories names of which could not be deciphered. The exact relation of Harisena over those territories could not be determined and it is difficult to believe that he succeeded in completely subjugating any of them¹⁰⁶. The Kośala kingdom, referred to in the Ajantā grant very probably meant the Sarbhapuriyā kingdom and not the Nala territory. Moreover, we have to note that the inscription of Ajantā is very much distorted and twice it has been read in two different ways assigning once to the main line of the Vākāṭakas and then to Basim branch next. It is more plausible that Harisena's spectacular rise eclipsed the power of the main branch of the Vākāṭakas and the struggle between the two houses led to their downfall almost simultaneously by the beginning of the 6th century A.D., for, we do not find reference to the Vākāṭakas in the list of power that stood against the Chalukyas in the middle of the 6th century A.D. The early Chalukya monarch had to subdue the Nalas and others and Sircar, rightly remarks, "that major part of the dominions of both the Vākāṭaka houses passed to the Nalas before the middle of the 6th century A.D."¹⁰⁷.

102. Sahu, *op.cit.*, p. 515.

103. Krishnarao, *op.cit.*, p. 665.

104. Sircar, *op.cit.*, p. 184.

105. Hyderabad archaeological series No. 14, Sircar, *op.cit.*, p. 185.

106. *Ibid.*, Nala kingdom was known by Niṣadha and Kāntāra and rarely by Kośala. So Kośala of Ajantā inscription cannot be identified with Nala territory.

107. *Ibid.*, Altekar believes that Vākāṭaka empire disappeared for Kādambas, Kālāchuris and Nalas of Bastar occupied their territory. Altekar, *op.cit.*, pp. 93-123.

H. L. Sukla¹⁰⁸ points out that the coins of Prasannamātra of the Śarabhapuriyā dynasty had close resemblance with the Nala coins which indirectly indicate that there was a close relationship between the Nalas and the Śarabhapuriyās¹⁰⁹. It is probable that the latter left the camp of Vākātakas and joined with the Nalas.

In the light of the discussion it is unreasonable to conclude that the Nalas under the valiant and great warrior Skandavarman were liquidated by Vākātaka Harisena. Rather he seems to have occupied portions of Vākātaka kingdom of both the houses and brought their vassals to their sphere of influence. He appeared to have annexed the kingdom of Bhīmasena¹¹⁰ of the House of Sura as well. The Nalas again during Skandavarman's time reached the pinnacle of political supremacy. So far the extent of his empire is concerned, we have no definite evidence to pin-point it. Nevertheless, from the foregoing discussion it is apparent that his empire stretched in the north-west from the eastern part of Berar to the Kośala region i.e. Sambalpur-Bilaspur-Raipur areas, in the north-east and it spread in the south in the Wainganga and Tel valleys. If the opinion of Sircar is to be believed his empire included portions of the kingdom of the Basim branch of the Vākātakas in the south-west. He seems to have a stronghold over the vast tract of territory. His capital was at Puškari right at the place where he set up the *pādamula* of Viṣṇu. During his long rule of great military achievements the capital city must have been well-organised (as is known from the Poḍāgaḍa inscription)¹¹¹ with

108. Sukla, *op.cit.*, pp. 66-67, *J.A.R.S.*, VI, pp. 195-98.

109. Initially the Śarabhapuriyās were under the Guptas, Harisena seems to have reigned their country about 500 A.D. with the help of the Nalas they perhaps consolidated their position and were under the sphere of political influence of the Nalas.

110. After Bhīmasena we do not know anything about his successor. Perhaps his family was uprooted by Skandavarman.

111. *E.I.*, XXI, p. 154.

palaces and chapels and residential sectors adorned with gardens and orchards. The extensive ruins of Poḍāgaḍa extending over miles are the only mute testimony of the prosperous capital city¹¹². Krisnamacharlu describing the find-spot of the stone inscription writes, "the provenance has been described at some length only with a view to indicate the extent of the decadence that has come over a country, which judging from its few known inscriptions and monuments, once enjoyed a civilised and cultured life in the early centuries of the Christian era".¹¹³

To administer the vast empire Skandavarman must have had a well-organised administrative system. Violation of royal orders was considered an offence against the king¹¹⁴. He used to supervise personally important works like foundation and construction of religious edifices and the pillar, perhaps a *Viṣṇudhajā* was caused to be planted by the king-personality¹¹⁵. Royal proclamations were well propagated on all sides under the direction of the generals. His officials were found to be devoted servants of the king. He carried out business of administration of the state with high officials like generals, composers, writers and engravers¹¹⁶. Thus he presided over a tough administrative system. What was his royal insignia we cannot say definitely. Probably it might have been the same *tripatākā*. By sharp contrast to his predecessors it is known definitely that he did not dedicate his kingdom to Meheśvara-Mahāsenas as he was a worshipper of Hari.

From the first verse of the Poḍāgaḍa inscription, which glorifies "Hari in his aspect as the essence of victory" it is apparent that he was a devout Vaiṣṇavite unlike his predecessors. With libation of water and with abundant *bhūridakṣiṇā* he donated a certain holding (*Pura*) to last for infinity for the supreme

112. *J.B.R.S.*, Vol. XXXIII, 1-2, pp. 7-19.

113. *E.I.*, XXI, p. 153.

114. *Ibid*, See verse 9.

115. Verse 10.

116. Verses 11-12.

being i.e. Hari for whom he established a *pādamula*. He directed that the proceeds of the holding should be utilised for the free feeding of Brāhmaṇa, ascetic, the poor and the destitutes in a *satra* (inn). The grant was made tax free and impenetrable to the state officials and was settled in the name of the son of noble Chakradroṇa. In the epigraph it is duly admonished that violation of king's orders will be resulted in the commission of sin and would be deemed as an offence against the royalty, while following the path of the king would lead to their refuge in God Vāsudeva. The inscription was set up in front of the temple.

The meaning of the word '*pādamula*' is not very clear. Kṛṣṇamacharlu, the editor of the epigraph, has translated it as sanctuary¹¹⁷ and Rajguru¹¹⁸ supports him. Some other scholars have identified it as temple. However, it seems to us to mean a '*Viṣṇu Vihāra*' which the king established with adequate arrangement for its maintenance and of which Viṣṇu was the presiding deity. In this connection G. Ramdas¹¹⁹ informs us that he noticed a stone slab, two feet in diameter with a slightly deepened depression of the man's right foot. The foot print itself is about 12" long and its worn out condition together with the eroded stone gave the impression to him that it belonged to the same age as the epigraph on the rocky hill. Perhaps it was the foot-print of Viṣṇu said to have been set up by prince Skandavarman. This possibility cannot be ruled out all together. Because in early times, it was a very common practice to worship the foot-prints of Gods which was apparently inspired by the Buddhist tradition. At Rāṇīpur-Jhariāl in Bolangir district of Orissa, we find very many sets of foot prints in the temple complex, which were worshipped in esteemed reverence. Rāṇīpur-Jhariāl was a '*tirtha*' with a beginning in 4th/5th century A.D. and was within the Nala domain. So the

117. *E.I.*, XXI, pp. 155-156.

118. Rajguru, *op.cit.*, p. 96.

119. *J.B.R.S.*, XXXIII, 1-11, p. 11.

pādamula described in the grant might be really a foot-print of Viṣṇu, which was established in the *Viṣṇu Vihāra* as is evident from the donation of holdings alongwith immense *bhūridakṣiṇā* for feeding the destitutes and inmates. N. K. Sahu¹²⁰ believes that "the foot print symbolises the dwarf incarnation of Viṣṇu and it appears that the idea of divine incarnation was popular in the Nala kingdom".

From the grant it is obvious that the worship of the ancestors and the earnest desire for the salvation of their departed souls was the practice of the day and part of the religious life of the people and the king. Arthapati made the Rithāpur grant for the blessing of his departed parents. Similarly, Skandavarman proclaimed in the Poḍāgaḍa inscription that he set up the foot-prints of God with the hope of obtaining religious merit for his father, other ancestors and mother and desiring welfare for himself¹²¹ (*pitū pitāmahanāncha jananya kritinā tathah*). In the kingdom of Skandavarman it appears that religion reigned supreme both in the private and public life. Violation of religious directives was believed to be visited by great *pañcha pāpa*.

Skandavarman was great patron of learning and literature and in his regime Sanskrit language witnessed its full efflorescence. He patronised great Sanskrit poets like Janturadāsa and Mālina who composed the Poḍāgaḍa epigraph in *Ārya* and *Vamśasthali* (*Anustupa*) metres, unique in its diction in the whole of the epigraphic literature of India¹²². Previous Nala grants were composed in prose and the introduction of the verse in this epigraph testifies to the growth of Sanskrit literature.

Neighbours

We know that Skandavarman was one of the greatest and invincible Nala emperors with an extensive empire. He dominated

120. Sahu, *op.cit.*, p. 518.

121. *E.I.*, XXI, p. 155.

122. Sahu, *op.cit.*, p. 517.

the Indian political scene of his age. He was a potent danger to the Vākāṭaka suzerainty which ultimately collapsed, and in that he seems to have much contribution. So long he was in the scene, no other neighbouring power could dare to touch his kingdom and he seems to have brought some of the former vassals of Vākāṭakas like Śarabhapuriyās to his fold¹²³. In the north the Kālāchuris and in the south-west the Rāṣtrakūṭas who are said to have extended their sway upto Aṣmaka¹²⁴ country, in the south the Māṭharas and in the north-east the Śarabhapuriyās were the neighbours of the Nalas. It is clear that the major part of the territories of both the Vākāṭaka houses fell in the hands of the Nalas sometime in the beginning of the 1st half of the 6th century A.D.¹²⁵ in the south central part of the Madhya Bharat. It is known that the Māṭharas were passing through a critical period with diminished political glory during the 2nd half of the 5th century A.D. under Prabhañjanavarman and Nanda Prabhañjanavarman. Their political history was marked with family feuds¹²⁶. It is probable that parts of their territory were annexed in the Nala kingdom and they acted as a buffer power between the Nala and the Viṣṇukunḍins. Of course we do not have any definite account in support of our contention but the suggestion is not altogether precluded, as the Nalas were referred to have been settled in Bellary, Kurmol and Tungabhadra valley sometime later and the Chalukya king Kirtivarman (567-507) destroyed their residence (*Nilaya*)¹²⁷. Mirashi¹²⁸ is of the opinion that Skandavarman after the death of Prithvisena-I, sometime in 498 A.D. succeeded in occupying Nandivardhan. In the north and south-west apparently the Kālāchuris and the Rāṣtrakūṭas seem to have

123. Sukla, *op.cit.*, pp. 66-67. The close resemblance of the coins of Prasannamātra with Nala coins lends support to the argument.

124. Sircar, *op.cit.*, p. 187.

125. *Ibid.*

126. Sahu, *op.cit.*, p. 491.

127. Sircar, *op.cit.*, p. 189.

128. *E.I.*, XXII, p. 210.

been his neighbours¹²⁹. Thus the Nalas under his leadership emerged as the most powerful force in the end of 5th century and in the beginning of the 6th century A.D. The arguments of many scholars that Vākāṭaka Harisena uprooted the Nala family in the same epoch and transplanted the western Gaṅgas in their territory is untenable.

Estimate

The death of Skandavarman in about 515 A.D. marked the end of a glorious epoch in the annals of the Nalas. By his valour he could make himself the foremost ruler of his age and under his military hegemony the Nala empire witnessed its highest efflorescence and reached the pinnacle of success in the fields of political domination, culture and civilisation.

He appeared in the political scene at a very critical juncture of the Nalas when their fortune was about to be nipped, by the impending Vākāṭakas invasion under the mighty Prithvīśena-II. He proved himself to be extraordinarily courageous and frustrated the Vākāṭaka attack and in no time made good the loss. He even dared march to the Vākāṭaka capital as a measure of retaliation and occupied it and finally contributed to their decline and downfall. Major portions of their empire eventually fell in his hand and no other power even ventured to take up cudgel with the Nala till his death. In fact, he was a great and invincible warrior and general of his age who added glory to the illustrious Nala family.

In the field of culture and literature and architecture his regime got the prolific impress of his vigorous and dynamic personality. Temples and *Vihāras* and residential sectors were constructed with the accumulated wealth of his exploits. The Sanskrit language made unprecedented development. The history and culture of the Nalas thus, became diversified, dynamic and revolutionary in his age which can rightly be designated as a glorious epoch in the annals of India.

129. Sukla, *op.cit.*, p. 69.

STAMBHA (C. 515-550 A.D.)

Prior to the discovery of the Kulia hoard¹³⁰ of gold coins, it was generally believed that Skandavarman was killed by Vākāṭaka king Hariseṇa of Vatsagulma and the Nala dynasty was liquidated¹³¹. Thereafter, some of the scions of the family migrated to other regions in the Tungabhadra valley, where they took up cudgel with the Western Chālukyas in the middle of the sixth century A.D.¹³² We have shown that the Nalas were never vanquished by the Vākāṭakas, rather they themselves perished in their own struggle for supremacy. Skandavarman seemed to have accelerated their fall and portions of their kingdoms fell in his hand. In fact, the territory of Hariseṇa extended in his hey-days upto the north-western part of the Tungabhadra valley in Aṣmaka¹³³ country (Northern Hyderabad). The opinion of B. V. Krisnarao¹³⁴ and following him a host of others, that "a branch of Nalas, thus, uprooted from sovereignty and driven from their home in west Kośala and Bastar, moved further south and settled on the bank of Tungabhadra" is self-contradictory and untenable. For, if they were uprooted from their own territory by Vākāṭakas of Vatsagulma, their settlement in Vākāṭaka territory of Tungabhadra region is impossible to conceive and it can be rejected *prima facie*. Further, the close resemblance of the coins of Prasannamātra and Mahendraḍitya, the Śarabhapuriyā kings, with the coins of the Nalas, indicates that there was close relationship between the two houses in the beginning and this led H. L. Sukla¹³⁵ to believe that the Śarabhapuriyās joined the camp of the Nalas deserting

130. J.N.S.I., XI, Parts I, II, pp. 108-110, *Prāchya Pratibhā*, Vol. V, Pt. I, pp. 69-79.

131. Krisnarao, *op cit.*, pp. 665-66.

132. *Ibid.*

133. Sircar, *op.cit.*, p. 187.

134. Krisnarao, *op.cit.*, pp. 665-66.

135. Sukla, *op.cit.*, pp. 66-67. It is also believed that Śarabhapuriyās might have been the vassals of Guptas. Sircar, *op.cit.*, p. 219.

that of the Vākāṭakas. They were perhaps the subordinate ally of the Nalas during the time of Śārabha. Thus, we have reasons and solid grounds to say that the Nalas ruled in unbroken continuity after Skandavarman. It is probable that Nala territory in his time touched the fringes of the Tungabhadra valley in the south-west, as he had wrested portions of Vākāṭaka dominion of the Vatsagulma house. His successors have had their hold on it till they were ousted from that region, apparently by Chalukya king Kīrtivarman-I in the middle of the 6th century A.D. As has been hinted elsewhere, the early part of 6th century A.D. witnessed the final dismemberment of Vākāṭaka empire and the downfall of the Māṭharas who were ruling in Kalinga region in the southern part of the Nala kingdom and similarly north India was also in turmoil following the fall of the imperial Guptas. Local governors of the former regimes founded their own kingdoms. Initially, such house like the Śārabhapuriyās and the Paṇḍuvamśīs at this time seemed to have grown up under the protection of the Nalas. With a strange career of vicissitude of various dimensions the Nalas survived shifting their activities to the south Kośala region for centuries.

Stambha¹³⁶ or Śrī Stambha seems to have succeeded Skandavarman. In the present state of our knowledge, we cannot say definitely, what was the exact relationship between the two, except to think that probably he was the son of Skandavarman the great Nala emperor. He had carved out a vast empire which even included parts of the kingdoms of both the Vākāṭaka houses, who went into oblivion in the 1st part of the 6th century A.D. Stambha seems to have inherited the vast empire of his predecessor. The findspot of his coin Kulia in Durg district where coins of Bhavadatta and Arthapatirāja were also found amply subscribes to our view that Nalas have had their sway in the eastern Berar region, over which Stambha also had

136. His name is speculated to have been Śristambhavarman as well, *J.N.S.I.*, Vol. XI, p. 110.

his sway. In the absence of any definite evidence it is difficult to say much about his rule, except to make certain probable suggestions by a comparative study of the political events of his days.

The circulation of gold coins by him testifies to his prosperous rule with an extensive kingdom. The early Śarabhapuriyās¹³⁷ (C. 500-555 A.D.) were very probably his contemporaries. They were known to have been ruling over Raigarh and Bilaspur region. N. K. Sahu¹³⁸ is of the opinion that king Śarabha was initially a Gupta military general who carved out a kingdom following the fall of the imperial Guptas. According to H. L. Sukla¹³⁹ Śarabhapuriyās were originally the vassals of the Vākātakas who left their camp and joined that of the Nalas. To us it appears that the Śarabhapuriyās founded a kingdom in the south Kośala (i.e. Raigarh, Sambalpur and Bilaspur region), to the North-East of the Nala kingdom perhaps with the help of the Nala king Skandavarman, for, the imperial Guptas would not have supported the growth of a new independent kingdom of Śarabha. At this time their kingdom i.e., south Kośala was perhaps attacked by the Vākāṭaka king Hariseṇa as is known from Ajantā inscription. By the timely help and intervention of the Nalas the Śarabhapuriyā kingdom seemed to have been saved. However, nothing certain can be said in this matter. It seems probable that the Śarabhapuriyās were originally the subordinate ally of the Nalas who later on (Sometime in the 2nd quarter of the 6th century A.D.) became independent and even extended their kingdom at the cost of the Nalas. The kingdom of Sura's family (Rājaraṣṭiyakula dynasty) which appears to have been annexed by Skandavarman was lying to the south east of the Śarabhapuriyā territory. The close resemblance of the device and fabric of Prasannamātra and Mahendrāditya coins with that of the Nala coins

137. Sahu and Others, *History of Orissa*, pp. 162-63.

138. *Ibid*, p. 162. Also see *Prāchya Prātibhā*, Vol. V, Pt. I, pp. 32-33.

139. Sukla, *op cit.*, pp. 66-67.

testifies to our supposition that the Śarabhapuriyās who followed the coin device and fabric of the Nalas were their subordinate ally in the beginning. The epigraph records that Sarabharāja was not an independent king and he was very probably subordinate to Śrīstambha.

With the accession of Mahārāja Narendra (C. 525-555), the history of the Śarabhapuriyās became eventful. From his Pipardulā plates¹⁴⁰ issued in his 3rd regnal year from Śarabhapura, it is known that he was not independent as his charter referred to his overlord Paramabhaṭṭārakapāda, who has been tentatively identified as a Gupta monarch. We have noted that Śarabhapuriyās had joined the camp of the Nalas. Arthapatirāja of the Nala dynasty was having Bhaṭṭāraka¹⁴¹ title and it is probable that the Paramabhaṭṭārakapāda of the Pipardulā grant referred to his Nala overlord Śrīstambha. However, sometime after his 3rd regnal year Mahārāja Narendra became powerful and independent and we know that his Kurud plates¹⁴² issued in his 24th regnal year from a military camp Tilakeśvara, does not refer to his overlord. The issue of the charter from a victorious military camp indicates that he was at war probably with the Nalas. The villages mentioned in this grants have been identified in Raipur, Bilaspur and Raigarh districts¹⁴³. Initially the territory of the Śarabhapuriyās was confined in Raigarh and Bilaspur region. The location of some donated villages in Raipur district indicates their territorial growth at the cost of the Nalas, who had their authority in earlier day in Raipur region. Because of the rising menace of the western Gaṅgas in the south-east of their kingdom, the Nalas could not check the expansion of the Śarabhapuriyās in the North-east of their territory.

With the decline of the Māṭharas, Skandavarman seemed

140. *I.H.Q.*, XIX, pp. 139-46.

141. Kesaribhaṭṭāraka Charter.

142. *E.I.*, XXXI, pp. 236-68.

143. *Prāchya Pratibhā*, Vol. V, Pt. I, p. 33.

to have extended his territory in the southern part of his empire over which Stambha probably had his sway in the beginning of his reign. But soon after, the Western Gaṅgas rose to power about 498 A.D. and Indravarman, the founder, had a long rule of more than 40 years. He was a very powerful king with a host of vassals under him as is evident from his Jirijingā copper plate grant¹⁴⁴ of Gaṅga Era 39 i.e., 537 A.D. He is known to have defeated the great Viṣṇukuṇḍian king, Indrabhaṭṭāraka. He had assumed the title of "Trikaḷiṅgādhipati". Trikaḷiṅga area has been identified with the hilly country lying to the west of Kaḷiṅga i.e., parts of Koraput and Bastar region. From this it is apparent that Indravarman, sometime in the 2nd quarter of the 6th century A.D. expanded his territory at the cost of the Nalas. We know that over the Trikaḷiṅga region Nalas had their sway. The assumption of the Trikaḷiṅgādhipati title by Indravarman amply testifies that he occupied parts of Nala territory and Stambha perhaps could not check his expansion as he was actively engaged with the Śarabhapuriyās in the north.

Tentatively we can assign him 35 years of reign and he seemed to have died about 550 A.D. at a critical time when the Nala kingdom was about to be sandwiched between the rising Śarabhapuriyā and the Western Gaṅga powers.

It is evident from his one coin of the Kulia hoard that he was a worshipper of Śiva like other Nala rulers. The coin is 16 mm. in diameter and weighs 0.720 gm.¹⁴⁵. On the obverse there is a circle of dots along the edge. The coin is divided into two parts by a horizontal line. On the upper half there is a couchant bull and below there is the legend 'Stambha' in box-headed character of Brāhmi of the early 6th century A.D.

From the circulation of gold coins by him, we can infer that he had a prosperous rule initially. He seemed to have suffered reverses in the later part of his reign. The find of his gold coin at Kulia indicates that his kingdom extended in the

144. Sahu, *op.cit.*, p. 87.

145. *Prāchya Pratibhā*, Vol. V, Pt. I, p. 73.

north upto Durg and Raipur region. In the south it extended upto the Indrāvati, in the east upto the river Suktel and in the west upto the valley of river Kotri.

NANDANARĀJA (C. 450-485 A.D.)

The next ruler of the Nala dynasty known to us is Nandanarāja¹⁴⁶. He probably succeeded Stambha sometime about 550 A.D. The exact relationship between the two is not known, but we may tentatively accept him as the son of Stambha. Interestingly, this king, Śrinandanarāja, whom we have ventured to identify as Śrinanda of the Gāndibedā¹⁴⁷ and Palāi¹⁴⁸ hoards of copper coins as well as with Nandanarāja of Kulīā hoard¹⁴⁹ of gold coins, is thus known to us from many sources. Tentatively we assign him between 550-585 A.D. The rule of Nandanarāja seemed to have passed through a period of trial. In the north-east of his kingdom, the Śarabhapuriyās under Narendra and Mahendrāditya¹⁵⁰ (C. 525-555, 555-580 A.D.) became powerful and very probably wrested away parts of his territory in that quarter.

There is controversy among scholars about the attribution of Mahendrāditya coins. However, we accept the view that Mahendrāditya is a Śarabhapuriyā king, who ruled after the 2nd quarter of the 6th century A.D. The coins of the most controversial figure in history 'Mahendrāditya', have been attributed to Kumāragupta by many distinguished scholars¹⁵¹.

146. On the ground of palaeography he may be placed after Stambha.

147. *O.H.R.J.*, V, pp. 157-159; Ganguli, *Historical Geography and Dynastic History of Orissa*, pp. 269-270.

148. *O.H.R.J.*, XXIX, 2-3, pp. 54-65.

149. *Prāchya Pratibhā*, Vol. V, Pt. I, p. 73.

150. *History of Orissa*, p. 163. N. K. Sahu identifies Mahendrāditya as a Śarabhapuriyā king. Also see *J.N.S.I.*, XIIIV, p. 11, *J.N.S.I.*, LXVI, pp. 21ff., *J.N.S.I.*, X, p. 137, *J.N.S.I.*, XI, p. 99, *J.N.S.I.*, XVI, II, p. 215, *J.N.S.I.*, XXII, p. 184.

151. *Ibid.* Mahendrāditya coins have been found in Khairtal hoard, Pitaibandh hoard, at Madanpur-Rampur and one coin is known

Previously his coins have been found in association with the coins of Krāmāditya and Prasannamātra¹⁵². But in the Kulia hoard his coins were also found in association with Nala coins¹⁵³ which definitely support our view that he was not very far away from the Nala rulers. Prasannamātra is already known to be a Śarabhapuriyā king and we have no doubt that Kumāragupta-III, the imperial Gupta king, was 'Krāmāditya' of the coin¹⁵⁴. He has been assigned between 535-570 A.D.¹⁵⁵ He was thus a contemporary of Mahendrāditya who ruled between (C. 555-580 A.D.). The Kulia hoard contains twenty five Mahendrāditya coins and five Nala coins. Of the five Nala coins, two belonged to Bhavadaṭṭa, one to Arthapati and one each to two new rulers of the same dynasty namely Stambha and Nandanarāja. We believe that Stambha and Nandarāja ruled after Skandavarman (i.e. after 515 A.D.)¹⁵⁶. Mahendrāditya, and Krāmāditya were their contemporaries and there is no wonder that the coins of these rulers have been found in the same hoard. The fabric and device of these coins also tend to our supposition. The wide circulation of Mahendrāditya and Prasannamātra coins further lend support to our argument that they became powerful and wrested away parts of the Nala territory as is evident from their find spots. The issue of copper coins by Śri Nanda identified with Nandanarāja indicates that he suffered reverses and faced financial crisis. His copper coins are reported from Gāndibeḍā in Balasore district and Palāi in Cuttack district of Orissa and the one gold coin from Kulia in Durg district of M.P.

to have been lodged in Lucknow Museum. Of these one series characterised by Kulia hoard type definitely belonged to Mahendrāditya of Amarāyakula and the other series characterised by Khairtal hoard type perhaps belonged to Kumāragupta, the imperial Gupta monarch.

152. *J.N.S.I.*, XL, Pts. I-II, pp. 108-110.

153. *Ibid.*

154. *Classical Age*, Vol. III, pp. 48-49.

155. *Ibid.*

156. See Sources.

In the south-west and south, similarly Nandanarāja faced the rising western Gaṅgas and he seemed to have been defeated by them who occupied his south-western part of the kingdom and perhaps drove him out from his capital Puṣkari. Of course, we do not have any direct evidence to strengthen our line of arguments. But the history of the Western Gaṅgas, their growth and expansion induce us to suggest on the same line without any chance of error.

With an humble beginning as a petty chieftain Indravarman, the first Western Gaṅga king, rose to power sometime in 498 A.D. following the fall of the Māṭharas and the Vākātakas of Vatsagulma. Taking advantage of the final fall of the Vākātakas and the Māṭharas as well as the germinal immaturity of the Western Gaṅgas, the Nalas under Skandavarman and perhaps under Stambha as well in his early days had acquired extensive territory in the south and south-west of their kingdom. Indravarman succeeded in occupying parts of Nala kingdom in the later part of Stambha's rule in Trikaliṅga region. With the accession of Nandanarāja sometime in 550 A.D., the struggle between the two houses became very severe. Unfortunately, we do not have any epigraphic record of Nandanarāja to trace the history of his rule and regime. Nevertheless, we have inscriptional evidence of the Western Gaṅgas and the Śarabhapuriyās and huge archaeological materials in Koraput, Raipur, and Kalahandi regions ascribable to the Nalas and attributed to the 6th century A.D. By a careful study of these source materials we can reasonably reconstruct the political history of Nandanarāja.

In south-west, Nandanarāja very probably confronted Sāmantavarman, the son of Gaṅga king Indravarman. In the beginning he seemed to have succeeded in his attempt to check their further expansion. Sāmantavarman perhaps had his hold over the Trikaliṅga region conquered by his father, as is evident from his title of "Trikaliṅgādhipati"¹⁵⁷. However, with the accession

157. Sahu, *op.cit.*, p. 88.

of Hastivarman about 575 A.D. the table was turned against Nandanarāja. From his Narasimpalli charter¹⁵⁸ of the Gaṅga year 79 i.e., 577 A.D., it is known that he successfully fought many battles and crushed mighty confederacy of his enemies. Although there is no specific mention of his enemy in his record, we have reason to believe that his enemies were no other than the Nalas with whom the Gaṅgas had rivalry since their inception. He seems to have defeated Nandanarāja and occupied his capital Puṣkari. The assumption of the title "*Kaliṅgādhipati*" by him unlike his predecessors who called themselves *Tri-kaliṅgādhipati* justify to our contention. He perhaps drove out the Nalas from their cradle land, Bastar and Koraput and assumed the title of lord of all Kalingas to signify his wide conquest. His other names Rājasimha and Raṇabhita indicate that he was a powerful and great warrior king. To make the newly conquered territory his permanent possession and to check the probable reliaition of the Nalas, he probably transferred his capital from Dāntapura to Kaliṅganagar on the Vansadhārā. The Nalas left their cradle land for many a century and ruled in Rājim and Raipur regions for many generations. Only about 900 A.D. a scion of the Nala family is known to have again occupied parts of the early Nala kingdom in Aska region of Ganjam district.

Driven out by the Gaṅgas Nandanarāja seemed to have moved towards the north-east and occupied the territory of Parvatādvārakās in Kalahandi district. Huge archaeological materials ascribable to 6th/7th century A.D.¹⁵⁹ have been found in the Sunabeda plateau and Mārāguḍā valley of Nawapara subdivision in Kalahandi district of Orissa. Archaeological excavations under the direction of veteran archaeologist N. K. Sahu¹⁶⁰ have brought to light a Śaiva-Śākta monastery unique in the whole of India belonging to the Nala period. The

158. *Ibid.*

159. *Ibid.*, p. 161.

160. *Unpublished Excavation report of Mārāguḍā valley.*

Mārāguḍā valley on the bank of the river Zonk is teeming with relics and ruins. We are inclined to say that Nandanarāja being driven away by Gaṅgas, perhaps established his capital on the Zonk valley. N. K. Sahu¹⁶¹ has explored the ruins of an ancient fort, now called Jumlagarh on the bank of the river Zonk and he ascribed it to 6th/7th century A.D. The formidable ruined fort Jumlagarh stands near the Kharaldhas fall and is famous for its strategic and military importance. The Zonk river meanders in 'U' shape round the fort. Near it there is a big tank called Raital Sagar which covers about fifteen acres of land and is surrounded by a natural embankment strong and wide enough. The ruins of this place indicate that it was a flourishing city in 6th century A.D.¹⁶² N. K. Sahu associates Jumlagarh fort with the Śarabhapuriyā rulers and identifies it as Śarabhapura. However, I find it difficult to accept Jumlagarh as Śarabhapura. Because we know certainly that the Śarabhapuriyās rose to power in Bilaspur-Raigarh region and Śarabhapura founded by Śarabharāja, the 1st king of the dynasty, might have been located somewhere in the said region. There is total uncertainty about its identification. However, many scholars¹⁶³ are inclined to identify Śarabhapura somewhere in Raigarh region which appears to be more plausible.

We are of the opinion that Nandanarāja seemed to have established his capital at Jumlagarh, when driven out by the Gaṅgas from Puṣkari. Some of the antiquities¹⁶⁴ brought to light by the excavation may be assignable to Nandanarāja. The Mahal and Rāñī Mahal mounds have yielded rich relics and ruins ascribable to the period between 5th and 7th century A.D. Since the 4th century A.D. Mārāguḍā valley had grown up

161. Sahu and Others, *History of Orissa*, p. 161.

162. *Ibid.*

163. L. P. Pandey identifies it with Sarapgarh in Sundargarh district, Mirasi, S. R. Nima, A. M. Sastri support him. *Prāchya Pratibhā*, Vol. V, Pt. I, pp. 14-20, Sahu, *op.cit.*, p. 161.

164. *Unpublished excavation report of Mārāguḍā Valley.*

into a big city marked with hectic cultural and religious activities and it appears very probable that Nandanarāja shifted his political activities to Jumlagarh on the Zonk river following his discomfiture in Puškari.

We have said that Mahārāja Narendra (525-555) and Mahendrāditya (555-580) of the Amarāryakula were Nandanarāja's contemporaries. The Kurud charter of Narendra was issued from his victorious military camp Tilakeśvara in his 24th regnal year indicating that he was engaged in severe warfare apparently with the Nalas. He seemed to have occupied portions of Nala territory in the north-east of Raipur and Bolangir region. He was succeeded by Mahendrāditya, who was the successor of Narendra and predecessor of Prasannamātra. From the wide circulation of his gold coins, we can presume that he had a prosperous rule. In the present state of our knowledge we cannot say definitely what sort of relation existed between Nala king Nandanarāja and Mahendrāditya. It appears that Nandanarāja after his defeat in the south-west by the Gaṅgas, perhaps consolidated his position in Mārāguḍā valley region and succeeded in contending the expansion of the Śarabhapuriyās. However, there seems to have been protracted and severe fight and boarder skirmishes between the two powers. In later days, the Śarabhapuriyās perhaps occupied parts of Nala territory in Kalahandi and Bolangir region as is evident from their records and Nalas were ultimately forced to move further north to the Raipur and Rājīm region. The protracted struggle between the two house finally led to their fall and the Pāṇḍuvarṇśi occupied their territory about 700 A.D. under the hegemony of Tivaradeva.

From the discussion it is obvious that Nandanarāja met with reverses in the hands of great and powerful Western Gaṅga king Hastivarman in the south-west of his kingdom. Hastivarman even seemed to have had annexed Puškari region to his kingdom and so Nandanarāja was forced to move to the north and perhaps consolidated his position in the formidable hill fort of

Jumlagarh in Mārāguḍā region wherefrom he probably succeeded in contending the further expansion of the Śarabhapuriyās. His protracted struggle with the Gaṅgas and Śarabhapuriyās seemed to have resulted in economic disaster coupled with political discomfiture, as evident by the circulation of copper coins¹⁶⁵ by him. The copper coins contain on the obverse a couchant bull and on the reverse there is the legend 'Śrīnanda' in the box-headed character of central Indian variety. The coins are strikingly similar with the known Nala coins so far the device and script are concerned with the difference that the legend is inscribed on the reverse. The names of the king in the copper coins¹⁶⁶ as well as in the gold coin of Nandanarāja of the Kuliā hoard¹⁶⁷ end in genetive case and probably they belong to the one and the same ruler¹⁶⁸. Now the findspot of the coins, one at Kuliā in Durg district of M.P. and the other ones of Gāndhibeḍā in Balasore district and at Palāi in Cuttack district of Orissa present a problem to us. It is known that coins are most migratory in nature and so the find of the coins in the coastal belt of Orissa and south part of M.P. does not necessarily imply vast territorial expansion of Nandanarāja over thoss area, rather they speak of trade, commerce and cultural contact. The territory of Nandanarāja seemed to have been confined in the upper valley of the rivers Zonk, Indrāvati, Mahanadi and Tandula including their tributaries comprising the parts of the present Durg, Raipur, Rājim, Mārāguḍā and Śihawā regions. He seemed to have shifted his capital to Jumlagarh on the bank of the river Zonk in the Sunabeda Plateau. From his coins we know that he was a worshipper of Śiva like other Nala rulers. The Śakta cult notwithstanding the political catastrophe of his age made significant progress in his rule.

165. Gandibeda and Palāi copper hoard, *O.H.R.J.*, V, pp. 157-59; *O.H.R.J.*, XXIX, 2-3, pp. 54-65; Ganguli, *op.cit.*, pp. 269-70.

166. Ganguli, *Ibid.*

167. *J.N.S.I.*, XI, I-II, p. 109.

168. See Sources.

The reign of Stambha and Nandanarāja marks the end of a phase and the beginning of another. Being driven out by the Western Gaṅgas from the Trikaṅga region i.e. Koraput and Bastar region, they moved to the north and carved out a kingdom in Raipur-Rajim and Mārāguḍā regions which endured for about two centuries. Notwithstanding, the political eclipse of the Nalas this epoch witnessed the climax of cultural and religious efflorescence and monumental outburst in this part¹⁶⁹. Śaivism, Śāktism and Tantricism developed in all their aspects and reached its apogee contributing enormously to the growth of religion, art and architecture. A number of sculptures of Tantric, Śiva and Vaiṣṇava pantheons found in this part together with the ruined temples of Puṣkari, Sāuntpur, Tentulikhunti, Saintalā and Mārāguḍā valley could be on stylistic ground assigned to this epoch. Rāṇipur-Jhariāl¹⁷⁰, as a *Tīrtha* seems to have flourished in this period.

In the Chālukya records¹⁷¹ it is stated that Kīrtivarman-I (567-597 A.D.) and Vikramāditya-I (middle of 7th century A.D.) defeated and destroyed the Nalas. In the present state of our knowledge we do not know who were those Nala kings and how far the Nala kingdom extended in the Tungabhadra valley. During the time of Skandavarman and perhaps in the early part of his immediate successor Stambha, Nala empire extended up to Tungabhadra valley region. It is plausible to think that a collateral branch of the Nalas after Skandavarman might have ruled over that part. Because in the light of our discussion it is impossible to think that by 567 A.D. the Nala empire ever extended upto Kurnool region. Most scholars have superfluously speculated that after Skandavarman his descendants migrated to Tungabhadra valley and when defeated by the Chālukyas again came back to south Kośala and carved out a kingdom in Raipur region in the 7th century A.D. We

169. See Chapters on religion, art and architecture.

170. *Ibid.*

171. *E.I.*, VI, p. 1 ; *I.A.*, XIV, p. 25 ; *J.B.B.R.S.*, XVI, p. 225.

are of the opinion that such a speculation is untenable. Nalas referred in the Chālukya records very probably belonged to the collateral branch who ruled over Tungabhadra valley after the eclipse of the main line following the demise of Skandavarman.

PRITHVĪRĀJA (C. 585-625 A.D.)

From 550 A.D. onwards observes Jayaswal¹⁷² "Hindu History melts into brilliant biographies, isolated gems without a common string of national and common life." In the early part of the 7th century A.D. three great luminaries rose to power in three different parts of India. In the north Harṣavardhan, in the east Śaśanka and in the south Pulakeśin II dominated the political scene of India and other local and regional rulers almost paled into insignificance. Now we have to review the political history of the Nalas in the light of the political events of this epoch.

From the Rājim stone inscription¹⁷³ we get the names of three rulers viz. Prithvīrāja, Viruparāja and Vilāsatuṅga as born in the family of Nala (*Kṣātonapo Nala*)¹⁷⁴. Scholars are of opinion that they belong to the Nala dynasty. Vilāsatuṅga, the donor of the grant has been assigned on the grounds of palaeography to the close of the 7th century A.D.¹⁷⁵ Viruparāja and Prithvīrāja were his predecessors. The Rājim stone inscription is very much mutilated and out of the 22 lines even a single line is not intact. The names of Prithvīrāja occurred in line 7th, Viruparāja in 9th and that of Vilāsatuṅga in line 11th in the inscription. It is generally believed that the names are in the chronological and genealogical orders¹⁷⁶. The inscription does not throw any light on their political history. Even

172. Jayaswal, *Hindupolity*, p. 158.

173. *E.I.*, XXVI, pp. 49-58.

174. *Ibid.*, Verse 6.

175. P. L. Misra is the lone scholar to assign this group of Nala kings to 4th/5th century A.D. by mere imagination.

176. See Chapter I.

some scholars have doubted, if at all Vilāsatuṅga was a king and the real donor of the grant. Sahu¹⁷⁷ writes "if it be taken as a royal record, it may at best be said that the Nalas established a small principality in the upper Mahanadi valley at the cost of the Śarabhapuriyas." They were eventually ousted by the Paṇḍuvamśis about the close of the 7th century A.D.

Scholars¹⁷⁸ have branded this group of rulers as later Nalas. However, we are of the opinion that they belong to the main line of the Nalas and apparently there is no genealogical gap. After some 160 years we find epigraphic records of another line of rulers belonging to the family of Nala. Therefore, it is reasonable to call this later group of Nala kings represented by Bhīmasenadeva as later Nalas¹⁷⁹. Due to paucity of evidence, the Rājim branch of Nalas are known to us by their names and no precise history is available to us. Most of the previous scholars who have presented the history of the Nala dynasty, have been left with no option but to simply mention their names. However, by a careful study of the contemporary political events of the Śarabhapuriyās who were their neighbours as well as that of Harṣa and Pulakeśin-II, the masters of North and South India, we can reasonably reconstruct the political history of the Rājim group of Nalas with appreciable amount of accuracy.

Prithvīrāja seemed to have succeeded Nandanarāja sometime in the last quarter of the 6th century A.D. As said there is no genealogical gap in the Nala line¹⁸⁰ and as such Prithvīrāja probably inherited the kingdom of Nandanarāja. He appeared to have continued the protracted war with the Śarabhapuriyās and checked their further expansion. Very probably he was a contemporary of Śarabhapuriyā king Prasannamātra (C. 580-

177. Sahu and Others, *op.cit.*, p. 79.

178. *Ibid.*, p. 79 ; Sukla, *op.cit.*, pp. 71-72 ; *O.H.R.J.*, Vol. XI, No. 2, pp. 95-102.

179. See Chapter I.

180. *Ibid.*

600 A.D.) and Sudevarāja (C. 600-625 A.D.). The coins of Prasannamātra have been found at Bhandra in Chanda district of Maharashtra, Khariar region, Nagpur region and from Cuttack districts of Orissa as well¹⁸¹. He is also known to have founded a new city 'Prasannapura' on the bank of Nidila. We do not have any epigraphic record of this king. However, the wide circulation of gold coins by him testifies to his prosperous rule. He seems to have wrested away parts of Nala territory in Khariar region as evident by the find of his coins in the same area where two charters of his successor Jayarāja and Sudevarāja were also found. Due to paucity of evidence nothing definite can be said about his war with the Nalas. Prithvirāja, perhaps in the early part of his reign, suffered some reverses in his hand. Jayarāja, the successor of Prasannamātra is known to us from his Khariar charter, Ārang charter and two Mallar charters. They have all been issued from Śarabhapura. These grants do not throw any light on his political history. The find-spots of the grants, however, testify that he maintained the dominions bequathed to him by his predecessors. The allusion in the records to his subduing the ruling chiefs by his prowess and to assailing the enemies by his valour of the seal inscription, probably indicates his war with Prithvirāja. V. V. Mirashi¹⁸² identifies that his enemy was Bhīmasena-II of the Rajarsitulyakula. His view is not tenable as we have shown elsewhere¹⁸³ that Skandavarman perhaps occupied their territory about 500 A.D. A. M. Sastri¹⁸⁴ points out that the 'allusion of subjugation of ruling chiefs' is found in all subsequent Śarabhapuriyā records and as such the statement seems to be more eulogistic and formal than real. Śarabhapuriyan dominions, at this point of time stretched over Bilaspur, north Raipur and Sambalpur region and Śarabhapura was also located some-

181. Sahu, *op.cit.*, p. 164.

182. *Studies in Indology-I*, p. 153.

183. See Page.

184. *Prāchya Pratibhā*, Vol. V, Pt. 1, p. 36.

where in this part. Mahendrāditya and Prasannamātra perhaps had extended their territory over parts of Bolangir and Khariar region of Orissa. There might have been some border skirmishes between Jayarāja and Prithvīrāja as the former is not known to have made any fresh conquest. The Rājim inscription amply testifies that the Nalas had their authority in the south-west of Raipur and Durg districts and perhaps their territory comprised the Mārāguḍā valley, parts of Bastar and Bolangir as well. By this time, Śaśānka in the east, Harṣa in the north and Pulakeśin in the south were bidding for imperial authority, and it is impossible to think that Śarabhapuriyās at this time were growing with territorial conquest in the central India over which the army of Pulakeśin and Harṣavardhan were rending the sky.

In the Rājim stone inscription¹⁸⁵ Prithvīrāja has been compared with the sacred river Rewā i.e., Narmadā. He was said to have been born in *Kali* age, which though marked with material prosperity was nevertheless accompanied by religious decline. Therefore, like Māndhātā he was created by God to show the people the path of virtue and purity. From this epigraphic reference it appears that he was a pious and powerful king and there was material prosperity in his kingdom. H. L. Sukla¹⁸⁶ believes that he defeated the Pānduvarṁśī king Bālārjuna and established political supremacy in south Kośala. This view of Sukla is baseless as Bālārjuna flourished much later. His speculation that he might have defeated the Chālukyas and Dallabas etc. and that he founded a new kingdom following the fall of Pulakeśin-II is equally not accepted as there is no basis of this contention. Similarly, the speculation of Mirashi¹⁸⁷ that he established his capital at Śirpur is untenable since the Śarabhapuriyās had their sway in that part. As we have said the extensive ruins of Mārāguḍā valley recently brought

185. Verses 8, 9.

186. Sukla, *op.cit.*, pp. 71-72.

187. *E.I.*, XXVI, pp. 49-50.

to light¹⁸⁸ induce us to say that the Nala capital was very probably located there. We are aware that Bilaspur-Sambalpur-Raigarh and northern Raipur region was the cradle and heart of the Śarabhapuriyā kingdom, and so we cannot think of Nala capital to have been located in that part at Śirpur. His territory very probably extended over the upper Mahanadi valley, upper Zonk valley, Tandula valley and the upper course of the river Indrā formed the boundary of Nala and Śarabhapuriyā kingdoms.

D. C. Sircar¹⁸⁹ has attempted to identify Prithvirāja with one Niṣadhapati Prithivīvyāghra referred in the Udayendram grant of Pallava king Nandivardhan (730-800). Since Prithivīvyāghra belonged to much later date, the learned view of Sircar does not appear to be correct. From the scanty evidence of the mutilated Rājim inscription we know that he was a pious and popular king who served his subjects (*Nīrmala sevyā sarva-janasya*). He has been described as '*Kṣitipati*' and has been equated with Māndhātā. He was probably a worshipper of Viṣṇu. The reference in the inscription to his creation like Māndhātā by God to show the people the path of virtue and purity seems to indicate his endeavours to promote the religious life of the people.

VIRUPARĀJA (C. 625-660 A.D.)

Viruparāja succeeded Prithvirāja sometime in 625 A.D.¹⁹⁰ His age was marked for the climax in struggle between Harṣavardhan and Pulakeśin-II for political supremacy in India and his closing years witnessed the beginning of family feuds in the Śarabhapuriyā house, the arch enemy of the Nalas. Viruparāja seemed to have taken advantage of this cataclysmic epoch and consolidated his position on firm ground. He is introduced in

188. *Unpublished excavation report of Mārāguṇā valley.*

189. *I A.*, II, p. 173.

190. See Chapter I.

the 9th verse¹⁹¹ as the son of Prithvīrāja. He is said to have been very popular among his subjects, who praised him in eulogistic terms. His fame as a great warrior and skillful general pervaded the whole earth. He was regarded as the embodiment of truth. He was magnanimous as *Hemavanta* and prisoners were praying at his feet. He was very handsome and truthful and was endowed with great prowess (*Bhīṣmapratāpena*) and other royal qualities.

From these frail references about his personality in the Rājim stone inscription, it appears that he was a great ruler endowed with all the kingly qualities. The Śarabhapuriyā king Sudevarāja (C. 630-655)¹⁹² was very probably his contemporary. He is known to have issued seven copper plate grants¹⁹³. Their find-spots are located in Raipur, Bilaspur and Raigarh region of M.P. and Khariar region of Orissa and the dates range from 2nd to 10th regnal year. The Mahāsamund and Kauvatalā plates were issued from Śirpur and the rest were from Śarabhapura. These charters do not throw any light on the political history of his age. The establishment of Śirpur as the 2nd capital might have some political implication and it was probably intended to contend the expansion of the Nalas towards Śarabhapuriyan domain from the 2nd capital. Due to want of definite evidence nothing certain can be said about the Nala-Śarabhapuriyā relation except to make some palapable conjecture by a study of the contemporary political events. The only point which appears to be definite is that the Nalas ruled in south-western Kośala and the Śarabhapuriyās in the north-eastern part of Kośala.

Harṣa-Pulakeśin war and Kośala

A lot has been said about the conquest of Harṣa (606-647). He is known to have conquered five Indias and in the east he

191. *E.I.*, XXVI, pp. 49-58.

192. Sahu, *op.cit.*, p. 167.

193. *Prāchya Pratibhā*, Vol. V, Pt. I, p. 38.

marched upto Śailodbhava territory in Ganjam district of Orissa. Unfortunately, the name of Kośala is conspicuous by its absence in the list of his exploits. He followed the course of the Ganges upto Bengal and then proceeded in the coastal belt of Orissa upto Koṅgoda and perhaps returned back to Kanauj by the same route. The five Indias referred by Hiuen Tsang did not include territory south of Vindhya and perhaps Narmadā as well¹⁹⁴. Therefore, it is certain that Kośala did not form a part of Harṣa's territory. Another Harṣa known to history from the Nepalese inscription of Jayadeva was the lord of Gauḍa, Oḍra, Kaliṅga and Kośala¹⁹⁵. However, he is not identical with Harṣa of Kanauj.

Pulakeśin's invasion of Kośala

Pulakeśin-II, the Chālukya monarch came to the throne in 610 A.D.¹⁹⁶. According to Yekkeri inscription¹⁹⁷ he was the master of entire Dakṣiṇāpatha. From the Aihole inscription, we knew that he defeated the Kaliṅgas along with the Kośalas. The verse in question says that "through the excellencies of their householders, prominent in the pursuits of three objects of life and having broken the pride of the rulers of the earth the Kaliṅgas with the Kośalas by his army were made to evince signs of fear"¹⁹⁸. Harṣa and Pulakeśin are known to have met in a pitched battle in Kaṅgoda where Harṣa very probably admitted defeat and retreated back¹⁹⁹. From Kaṅgoda Pulakeśin-II marched towards Kośala as is evident from the study of his route of conquest. While returning from Kaṅgoda to Bādami he seemed to have invaded Kośala and subdued both the Nalas

194. S. C. Behera, *Rise and Fall of Śailodbhavas*, p. 73.

195. *Ibid.*, p. 76.

196. *E.I.*, XVIII, p. 261.

197. *E.I.*, V, pp. 7-8.

198. *E.I.*, I, p. 1, *I.A.*, VIII, pp. 242-245.

*Grilīnām sya svaguṇāi strivargutunga Vihitanya kṣitipālamane
bhangaḥ abhavannupajāta bhitilīṅga yadānikana sa kośalah kaliṅgaḥ.*

199. Behera, *op.cit.*, p. 78.

as well as the Śarabhapuriyās²⁰⁰. His attack of Kośala is believed to have taken place sometime before 634 A.D.²⁰¹ The conquest of south Kośala by Pulakeśin-II appears to be a brilliant military raid without permanent subjugation. His defeat in the hands of the Pallavas which resulted in his death in about 642 A.D. was followed by the disintegration of his empire and Kośala seems to have been left beyond the pale of his successor's control. After the Chālukya attack, there was family dissension in the Śarabhapuriyā house²⁰². As is evident from the extant evidence of the mutilated Rājim Grant, the Nala king Viruparāja seemed to have emerged as a powerful ruler. Probably he supported the cause of the younger branch of the Śarabhapuriyās who founded a new and independent principality at Śirpur under Pravaraarāja, the younger brother of Sudevarāja. There is no definite evidence in support of our contention. But the logic of the situation warrants such a speculation.

Hiuen Tsang's account of Kośala

Hiuen Tsang (Yuan Chwang) who travelled in India from 630-645 A.D. has given a graphic account of South Kośala. Very probably at that time the Nala king Viruparāja was reigning over Western Kośala and the Śarabhapuriyās were the rulers in its eastern part.

The pilgrim narrates, "from Kalinga he went north-west by hill and wood for above 1800 li to Kośala²⁰³. This country, more than 6000 li in circuit, was surrounded by mountains and was a succession of woods and marshes, its capital is being above 40 li in circuit. The soil of the country was rich and fertile, the towns and villages were closed together, the people

200. Sircar thinks, Pulakeśin defeated Panduvamśis in Kośala. *Classical Age*, Vol. III, p. 238.

201. Behera, *op.cit.*, p. 76.

202. N. K. Sahu and Others, *History of Orissa*, pp. 167-8.

203. In the 'Life' the country is called 'South Kośala' to distinguish from north Kośala of which Srāvasti was the capital.

were prosperous, tall of stature and black in colour, the king was a *Kṣatriya* by birth, a Buddhist in religion and of noted benevolence"²⁰⁴. Near the south of the city i.e. apparently the capital there was an old monastery with an Aśokan Tope. "To the south-west of the country above 300 li from the capital was a mountain called Po-lo-mo-lo-ki-li"²⁰⁵. From Kośala he travelled south through a forest for above 900 li to the An-to-lo country²⁰⁶ i.e. Āndhradeśa.

In the light of the above references of the Pilgrim, we have to locate Kośala and identify its capital. Cunningham²⁰⁷ defines the extent of Kośala as "comprising the whole of the upper valley of Mahanadi and its tributaries from the source of Narmadā at Amarkantak in the north, to the source of Mahanadi itself near Kānker, on the south and from the valley of Wainganga, on the west to the Hadso and Zonk rivers on the east". This vast area rightly extending over a circuit of 6000 li (1800 km) of pilgrim's account over present Durg, Raipur, Bastar, Raigarh, Sarguja and Bilaspur districts of M.P. Bhandara and Chandarpur area of Maharashtra and Sundargarh, Sambalpur, Bolangir and Kalahandi districts of Orissa, was the territorial boundary of traditional South Kośala²⁰⁸. As we have shown, traditional Kośala was parcelled out into a number of small kingdom and were ruled by various dynasties like the Nalas, Śarabhapuriyās and Paṇḍuvamśis at the time of the visit of the pilgrim and apparently Hiuen Tsang had defined the boundary of this traditional Kośala. It is impossible to think that any one of the ruling houses referred to above had their sway over the entire Kośala. So the opinion of D. K. Ganguli²⁰⁹ that the Paṇḍuvamśis were holding their sway over

204. Watters, II, p. 200.

205. *Ibid.*, p. 201.

206. *Ibid.* p. 1209.

207. *Archaeological reports*, XVII, pp. 68-69; Cunningham, *Ancient Geography of India*, p. 603.

208. See Pages, 43-44.

209. Ganguli, *op.cit.*, p. 78.

Dakṣiṇa Kośala when Hiuen Tsang visited the country is not tenable. Similarly, the contention that Śārabhapuriyās²¹⁰ were the master of entire Kośala at his time is unacceptable. We like to suggest that Hiuen Tsang referred to the boundary of traditional Kośala over which the Pāṇḍuvamśis, the Śārabhapuriyās and the Nalas were having their sway in different regions at the time of his visit.

Now one problem arises regarding the identification of the capital of Kośala which Hiuen Tsang described as being above 40 li i.e. 12 km. in circuit. Cunningham²¹¹ identifies the capital of Kośata with Chanda and Fergusson²¹² with Wyrghur. R. D. Banerji²¹³ think it as Vājiraghara of Hāthigumphā inscription. Hiralal²¹⁴ points out either Bhandak or Śīrpur as the capital city of Kośala while Beal²¹⁵ identifies it with Nagpur or Amara-vati and D. K. Ganguli²¹⁶ think it to be Śīrpur. To us none of the suggestions appears to be correct for the following reasons.

1. The pilgrim says that the capital city was 40 li i.e. 12 km. in circumference and none of these sites have yielded ruins extending over a big area of some 10-12 km.
2. From Kaliṅga he travelled north-west and reached the Kośala capital. Śīrpur is located in the north-east of Kaliṅga and so Śīrpur which was the capital of the Śārabhapuriyās, cannot be identified with the capital site of Kośala referred to by Hiuen Tsang.
3. Nagpur, Chanda, Bhandak and Wyrghar regions were at this time under the domination of Pulakeśin-II whose capital was at Bādami and hence we cannot think of the existence of Kośala capital in that part of such a large dimension.

210. N. K. Sahu and Others, *op.cit.*, p. 107.

211. Cunningham, *Ibid.*

212. *J.R.A.S.*, 1875, p. 260.

213. Banerji, *History of Orissa*, Vol. I, p. 143.

214. *I.A.*, LXII, p. 163.

215. *Travels of Hiuen Tsang*, IV, p. 414.

216. Ganguli, *op.cit.*, p. 78.

If we examine critically the directions and distance between places described by Hiuen Tsang, it appears that he did not traverse the entire Kośala kingdom, the traditional boundary of which he has defined as of 6000 li in circuit, apparently from hearsay. Very probably, he visited south-west Kośala over which the Nalas were ruling and as such, he seems to have described the Nala capital as the capital of Kośala country. Vast ruins of an extensive city complex with remains of fortified palaces, religious complexes and court hall have been explored and excavated in the Mārāguḍā region of Sunabeda Plateau on the Zonk valley (ascribable between 4th to 7th century A.D.). In fact, a visitor to this part will be surprised to see vestiges of a rich culture spreading over 10×12 km. area. On the basis of extensive cultural treasures unearthed through excavation I am prone to identify this Mārāguḍā valley as the capital city of South Kośala (of the pilgrim's account belonging to the Nalas. This part was under their sway since 4th century A.D.). The following points bear testimony to my identification.

1. In the Mārāguḍā valley, rich remains and relics are found spreading over an extensive ruined city complex stretching over 10×12 km. area.
 2. The Chinese pilgrim has described of an old monastery with an Aśokan Tope to the south of the city. J. P. Sing Deo²¹⁷ has recently discovered the ruins of a *stupa* referred to by the pilgrim in the Mārāguḍā valley.
 3. To the South-West, at a distance of about 300 li (i.e. 90 km.) from the capital, the pilgrim refers to one Po-lo-mo-lo-ki-li which has been identified with the Poḍā-
217. Historical sites of Khariar 'New dimension of Tourism in Orissa', p. 39. "The top portion of *stupa* has also been found. Four figures of Buddha seated in some *Mudrā* or posture in a stone structure like the lion capital of Aśoka have been collected and preserved in the house of a Jain family at Dharambandha village. The *stupa* can be assigned to the Mauryan period, when the construction of *Stupa* was prevalent in India".

gaḍa hill of Koraput district by Ramdas²¹⁸. He further identifies the capital of Kośala described by the pilgrim with Puškari, the earlier Nala capital²¹⁹. This view is untenable since Poḍāgaḍa area was no longer the capital of Nalas. Po-lo-mo-lo-ki-li might have been situated somewhere in Koraput or Bastar region²²⁰.

Now if we measure 1800 li (i.e. 450 km.) to the North-West of Kaliṅga's capital identified with Mukhaliṅgam²²¹, it comes to the Nagpur and Wyrgarh region, that under Pulakeśin-II and apparently the region was the North-Western border of traditional Kośala country. Therefore, we have reason to say that there is some confusion in the account of the pilgrim. The north-westerly direction and distance of 1800 li very probably means the distance between Kaliṅga's capital and the north-western limit of the traditional Kośala kingdom. The distance between Kaliṅga's capital and Kośala's capital appears to be some 800 li. Because Hiuen Tsang himself states that from the capital of Kośala he travelled south, through forest, for above 900 li to the Āndhra country.²²² Now, if we measure 800 li in the north-west from Mukhaliṅgam we reach the upper valley region of the river Zonk, i.e., to the Mārāguḍā valley, which was the capital of Kośala. From this place, 900 li to the south is Āndhra country as narrated by the pilgrim. Thus, from our discussion it is clear that Hiuen Tsang travelled in south-western

218. *J.B.R.S.*, XXXIII, I-II, pp. 15-16. Po-lo-mo-ki-li is identified as Parimalagiri (Gandhamardhan hill range) by N. K. Sahu. This view is not tenable since it is not in the north-west of Kaliṅga. R. D. Banerji's identification of Brahmagiri is also not tenable on the same ground. Other view that it is located in the Krishna valley is also not acceptable since the distance referred is 300 li.

219. *Ibid.*

220. Rajguru is inclined to locate Po-lo-mo-lo-ki-li somewhere in the hilly tract of Kalahandi or Bastar. *Inscriptions of Orissa*, Vol. IV, p. 346.

221. *Calcutta Review*-1931, *E.I.*, VI, 24, 1184.

222. *Watters*, II, p. 209.

Kośala and its capital, which was under the Nalas at the time of his visit.

The Nala king Viruparāja was very probably reigning at that time. He speaks of the king as born in the *Kṣatriya* family. Nalas as we have already discussed were *Kṣatriyas* tracing their origin from the epic Nala. From his account it is evident that Mahāyāna Buddhism was also popular in this part. The discovery of a number of Buddhist sculptures in Mārāguḍā region further substantiate our contention. In the 'Life'²²³ the pilgrim tells that there were a great number of heretics who lived intermixed with the population and also *deva* temples. The heretics referred to by him were very probably those other than Buddhists. He described that the king was a Buddhist. This remark of the pilgrim may not be unreasonable in sense that the king was eclectic in his religious outlook and tolerant to all religions. He further says that the king was of noted benevolence. From the mutilated Rājim stone inscription we know that Viruparāja was a popular and benevolent king who was universally eulogized by his subjects.

VILĀSATUṄGA (C. 660-700 A.D.)

Vilāsatuṅga was the son and successor of Viruparāja. He ordered the Rājim inscription to be carved out. The purpose of the epigraph was to record the building of a temple dedicated to Viṣṇu for the salvation of the departed soul of his son.

*"Karit sthāna muchei viṣṇo puṇya bhibrudhye
dasajana sukhātithya-bhāmah sutrasya"*²²⁴

From the remnant inscription it appears that during his time the Nala kingdom had attained political stability and economic prosperity impelling him to involve himself in peaceful activities. We have shown in the previous pages that taking advantage of the family dissension of the Śarabhapuriyā house Viruparāja had consolidated his position on solid grounds.

223. *Life*, 135.

224. *E.I.*, XXVI, pp. 49-56.

From the mutilated inscription it is further evident that Vilāsatuṅga was a powerful king, whose strength of the sword was compelling his enemies to pay him homage²²⁵.

The Śarabhapuriyās and the Pāṇḍuvarṁśīs, in the north-east and in the south perhaps the Śailodbhavas were his turbulent enemies. Further evidences are necessary to shed more light in the matter. On palaeographic evidence his inscription has been assigned to C. 7th century A.D. by Mirashi²²⁶. We can say with some amount of accuracy that he flourished towards the end of 7th century A.D., when the Śarabhapuriyās were engulfed in family dissension and were heading towards their final fall and when the Pāṇḍuvarṁśīs of Mekhalā were emerging as a great power.

The Śarabhypuriyā king Pravaraṛāja (who established himself at Śirpur) and Sudevarāja-II who ascended the throne of Śarabhapura were very probably his contemporaries²²⁷. We do not know anything about the history of his rule and regime. The Nagpur Museum stone inscription²²⁸ describes Nannarāja, the Pāṇḍuvarṁśī king of Mekalā as a great king who conquered the earth. His successor Tīvaradeva (700-725 A.D.) in his copper plate charters proclaimed himself as the lord of entire Kośala and he seemed to have acquired the territories of the Śarabhapuriyās and Nalas as well. It is believed that Sudevarāja-II²²⁹ the last Śarabhapuriyā king died issueless and a similar situation might have occurred in the Nala house as the Rājīm grant speaks of the death of the son of Vilāsatuṅga, for whose salvation he built the temple. Thus, the glorious Nala family and the Śarabhapuriyā house were supplemented by the Pāṇḍuvarṁśīs who acquired the sovereignty of entire Kośala. His kingdom was probably extending over the upper valleys of

225. *Ibid.*

226. See Chapter I.

227. Sahu and Others, *op.cit.*, pp. 168-171.

228. *Ibid.*, 172.

229. *Ibid.*

Mahānadi, Zonk, Tandula, and the river Indrā comprising parts of modern Durg, Raipur, Bastar, Koraput and Kalahandi districts.

PRITHVĪVYĀGHRA (C. 700-740 A.D.)

From the Udayendram Grant²³⁰ of the Pallava king Nandivardhan-II of Kānchi, we come to know that his general Udayachandra claimed to have overpowered one "king of Niṣadha named Prithvīvyāghra". D. C. Sircar²³¹ and following him H. L. Sukla²³² regard Prithvīvyāghra as a Nala king since he was known to have been ruling over parts of Niṣadha country, the traditional Nala kingdom.

The Udayendram Grant of Nandivardhan Pallavamalla²³³ (730-800 A.D.) states the following. "*Uttaraśyāmapī diśi Prithvīvyāgramidhā Niṣadhapatirṁ Pravalāyamānārṁ aśvamedha turāṅgamānusanayanampataṁ anusṛtya.*"²³⁴

It is thus evident that Niṣadhapati Prithvīvyāghra had performed one horse sacrifice and occupied the southern part of the eastern Chālukya dominion in the northern fringe of Nellore district. The Grant further states that the general of Nandivardhan drove away Prithvīvyāghra from the territory or *Viśaya* of Viṣṇurāja (Viṣṇuvardhan-III, 709-746) which he had occupied and annexed with his master's kingdom. Considering the dates of Chālukya king Viṣṇuvardhan-III and Pallava king Nandivardhan-II, we can place Prithvīvyāghra in the 1st half of 8th century A.D.²³⁵

230. *I.A.*, VIII, p. 273; Sircar, *Classical Age*, Vol. III, pp. 254 and 263, Sukla, *op.cit.*, p. 74.

231. *Ibid.*

232. *Ibid.*

233. Sircar, *op.cit.*, p. 262.

234. *I.A.*, VIII, p. 273. Venkataramanayya thinks that the horse sacrifice was performed by Nandivarman-II, *op.cit.*, pp. 75-76. However, the reading of Sircar appears to be correct.

235. See Chapter I.

About the political history of this Nala king we do not know anything. In the present state of our knowledge it is equally difficult to define the limit of his Niṣadha country and to establish his relationship either with the Rājim group of Nalas or the Nalas, referred to in the Chālukya records as ruling over Tuṅgabhadra valley whom Vikramāditya-I annihilated. However, from his horse sacrifice it appears that he was a powerful king. Very probably he was a scion of the Rājim group of Nalas who after their defeat at the hands of Pāṇḍu-varṇī Tivaradeva, migrated to the south to the valley of the river Indrāvati where he founded a kingdom on some portions of the ancient Niṣadha territory. He seems to have been defeated by the Pallava king Nandivardhan who drove him out from the Nellore region. Nevertheless, he continued to rule over his Niṣadha country till his death.

After him, for about 160 years, we do not know anything about the Nalas. From epigraphic evidence we come to know that one Bhīmasenadeva claiming descent from the Nala family was ruling over Ganjam district in the beginning of 10th century A.D. In the present state of our knowledge we cannot say definitely if he was connected with the house of Prithivīyāghra but the possibility of such a connection cannot be ruled out altogether.

Later Nalas

The history of the Nalas from the 2nd half of the 8th century A.D. upto the beginning of 10th century A.D. is shrouded in mystery. The descendants of Prithivīyāghra might have been ruling over parts of ancient Niṣadha country as a petty political power during this period. Due to paucity of evidence, we are not in a position to connect the lineage of Bhīmasenadeva²³⁶ who appeared and ruled over Ganjam region in the beginning of 10th century A.D. with the former Nalas. Therefore, I like to place him in the group of later Nalas.

236. *O.H.R.J.*, VI, I, p. 11f ; *E.I.*, XXXIV, pp. 233-238.

BHĪMASENADEVA (C. 900-935 A.D.)

From the Panḍiā Pathar copper plate charter²³⁷ of “*Mahārājadhirāja Parameśvara Bhīmasenadeva*” (who calls himself as of the ‘*Nalodbhava*’ family) we come to know that he was a Nala king. The charter has been dated in *Bhauma Saṁvat* that begins in 736 A.D. and accordingly S. N. Rajguru²³⁸ has fixed the date of the grant as 925 A.D. So we can assign him sometime in the 1st half of the 10th century A.D., tentatively between 900-935 A.D. Nothing is known about the ancestry and emergence of this king. However, from his high-sounding title “*Mahārājadhirāja Parameśvara*” it appears that he was a great ruler. The grant has been issued from Bhīmapura identified with the present Bhīmanagar near Aska in Ganjam district of Orissa, which is at present surrounded by hills and forest on all sides. As gleaned from this record, the kingdom over which Bhīmasena ruled was called Khindirisīṅga *Maṇḍala*. According to Rajguru “although it was named as *Maṇḍala* actually it was an independent territory and situated between Kaliṅga *Maṇḍala* of the Gaṅgas and Kīṇjali *Maṇḍala* of the Bhañjas”. It is evident from the Madras Museum Plates²³⁹ that Khindirisīṅga *Maṇḍala* was a kingdom, consisting of a number of principalities or Zamindaries like Baḍagaḍa, Seragaḍa and Dhārkot. In the epigraph Bhīmasenadeva has been described as an ornament of the *Nalodbhava* family who ruled the entire Khindirisīṅga *Maṇḍala* with great ability and powers of his own arms and who gained merit including strength to control the infinite *Sāmantaçhakras*²⁴⁰. From this it is evident that he was a great, independent and powerful king who had controlled a host of feudatories i.e. *Sāmantas*. His *Parameśvara* title also testifies to his paramountcy and leaning to Śaivism.

237. *Ibid.*238. *Ibid.*239. *E.I.*, XXVIII, pp. 44-51.240. *O.H.R.J.*, Vol. VI, Pt. I, pp. 97-102.

The grant records the donation of the village Kurmatāla to Sadbhaṭṭa and Yajmi Bhaṭṭa Prakaṣana etc. for the increase of merits of his parents and himself. It is made in *Sambāt* 189 and was written by Akraḍeva, the minister of war and peace (*Sandhivigrahin*). The existence of the office of *Sandhivigrahin* in his regime indicates that he was actively engaged in warfare and garbed out neighbouring territories as an aggressor. D. C. Sircar²⁴¹ identifies Khindirisṛiṅga *Maṇḍala* with the modern Kandarsingā located to the north of Brahmani river. His learned view does not appear to be correct since the records of Bhīmasenadeva and Narendradhavalā containing the name of Khindirisṛiṅga *Maṇḍala* were discovered near Aska in Ganjam district. Formerly, the ex-Zamindaries of Dharkot, Seragaḍa, Baḍagaḍa and Soroḍa were parts of Khindirisṛiṅga²⁴². Therefore, very probably the kingdom of Bhīmasenadeva was extending over these parts with its northern and western fringes comprising parts of Koraput and Bastar districts as well. His capital was situated at Bhimapura near Aska.

As evident from the inscription, he was a worshipper at the feet of God Śrī Yamaliṅgeśvara.

NARENDRADHAVALA (C. 935-960 A.D.)

Bhīmasenadeva was very probably succeeded by Narendradhavalā²⁴³. He is known to us as ruling over Khindirisṛiṅga *Maṇḍala* from his Madras Museum Plates²⁴⁴. Rajguru thinks that the script used in this grant is decidedly a later development of the character of the Pāṇḍiāpathar charter of Bhīmasena. On this ground we may accept him as the successor of Bhīmasena who ruled over the territory of the latter. In the grant it is stated that one *Rāṇaka*, apparently a feudatory, Ghoṅghaka of Nāga dynasty granted a village after purchasing it from Śrī

241. *E.I.*, IV, p. 318.

242. *O.H.R.J.*, Vols. VI, I, pp. 97-102.

243. See Chapter I, *O.H.R.J.*, *Ibid.* Sukla, *op.cit.*, pp. 77-78.

244. *E.I.*, XXVIII, pp. 44-51.

Śilabhanjadeva in Gomunda *Maṇḍala*, a part of Khindirisṭiṅga kingdom of Narendradhavalā. In all probability Narendradhavalā, the over-lord of Nāga king *Rāṇaka* Ghoṁghaka was a scion of the Nala family, who had his suzerainty over a host of feudatory chiefs. The inscription records "*Siddham Khindarisṭiṅhe Śri Narendradhavalā rājye gomunḍa maṇḍale dharaminpa vinisruta Nāgavaṁsa sambhava Rāṇaka Śri Madhu Varāha-Sutarānaka Śri Vikāra Vikārasuta rāṇaka Śri Ghaṅghokena*".

It appears that Narendradhavalā was having his authority over a host of *Rāṇakas* like Bhīmasenadeva. The Nāgavaṁsi chiefs and probably the Bhanjas as well were their feudatories. Thus, he seemed to have ruled over the kingdom of Bhīmasenadeva with his capital at Bhīmapura. Interestingly the old Zamindaries of Dhārkot, Baḍagaḍa, Seragaḍa and Soroḍa were originally known as Khidisiṅgi, apparently forming parts of Khindirisṭiṅga *rājya* of the Nalodbhava kings in earlier days.

Since Bhīmasenadeva has used the *Bhauma Era* in his grant N. K. Sahu²⁴⁵ and S. N. Rajguru²⁴⁶ speculate that he was palpably ruling as subordinate to the Bhaumas. However, from the glorious epithet of Bhīmasena, it appears that he was an independent king having a host of feudatories under his sway. Bhauma Era was popular at that time and was perhaps regarded as a standard reckoning and so he seemed to have used the same in his charter. It does not necessarily mean his subordinate status to the Bhaumas. Thus, Bhīmasena and Narendradhavalā were the last independent representatives of the glorious Nala dynasty.

SOBHANACHANDRA SINGH (C. 1168-1206 A.D.)

Of the ancient *Zamindars* of Khindirisṭiṅga *rājya*, the house of Dhārkot claims its descent from the Nala dynasty. Sobhana-

245. Sahu and Others, *op.cit.*, p. 79.

246. Rajguru, *Inscriptions of Orissa*, Vol. V, Pt. I, p. 112.

chandra Singh, the founder of this family is said to have come from Jaipur region in the 12th century and founded the principality of Dhārkot²⁴⁷. V. Rangacharya²⁴⁸ writes "Dhārkot is the seat of an ancient Zamindari adjoining Boḍagaḍa on the north and Goomsur on the east. It was originally a part of Khidisingy Zamindari alleged to be founded by Shobhanachandra Singh in A.D. 1168-1206. It became a separate Zamindari in 1476, when Boliar Singh divided the original estate into four divisions". Sobhanachandra Singh was perhaps a descendant of Narendradhavala, who ruled over the small principality of Dhārkot as a Chieftain of perhaps the Eastern Gaṅgas.

PURUṢOTTAM SINGHADEVA (C. 1206-1230 A.D.)

From the local records²⁴⁹ we know that Puruṣottam Singha-deva ruled over Dhārkot after Sobhanachandra Singh sometime in the beginning of 13th century A.D.

"Askā Daṇḍapati nalavaṁsarāju dhārkot chief Puruṣoṭṭama Singhadeva".

His estate was in Aska region and he was known to us as the last progeny of the glorious Nala dynasty. We have already indicated that the Nalas held their sway at different points of time over Bastar, Koraput, Kalahandi, Raipur, Durg and Ganjam regions for about long eight hundred years. The present Zamindar family of Dhārkot in the district of Ganjam claims its descent from the Nalas.

DECLINE OF THE NALAS

Similar to their origin, the precise causes of the decline and disintegration of the Nalas are shrouded in oblivion. The political history alludes their eventful reign of about eight centuries beginning from 4th to 11th century A.D. in various

247. *I.M.P.*, I, p. 67.

248. *Madras Manual*, III, pp. 267-70.

249. *J.B.R.S.*, XXXIII, pp. 7-12.

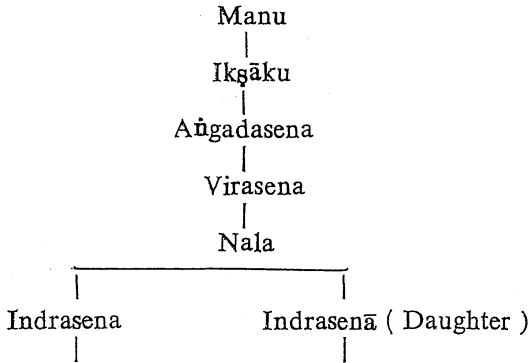
parts of ancient Niṣadha and Kośala country, primarily over the upper valley of Mahānadi including its tributaries with a strange carrier of varied fortunes.

Since their origin, the Nalas involved in protracted wars with many a neighbouring political power in the frontiers of their kingdom. In the early part of their career, they indulged in severe struggle with the Vākātakas. They are also known to have taken up cudgel with the Chālukyas, the Western Gaṅgas, the Śarabhapuriyās and the Pāṇḍuvarṁśis. In the middle of the 6th century A.D. they were driven out from their cradle land Puṣkari region perhaps by the Western Gaṅgas and consolidated their position in Kalahandi, Raipur and Durg region. They entered into a career of protracted struggle with the Śarabhapuriyās and eventually their kingdom was occupied by the Pāṇḍuvarṁśi Tivaradeva about 700 A.D. Thereafter, some scion of the family seemed to have founded a principality in Ganjam region, who were probably conquered by the Eastern Gaṅgas. After Bhīmasenadeva, the Nalas were known to have been reduced virtually to the level of petty political feudatory.

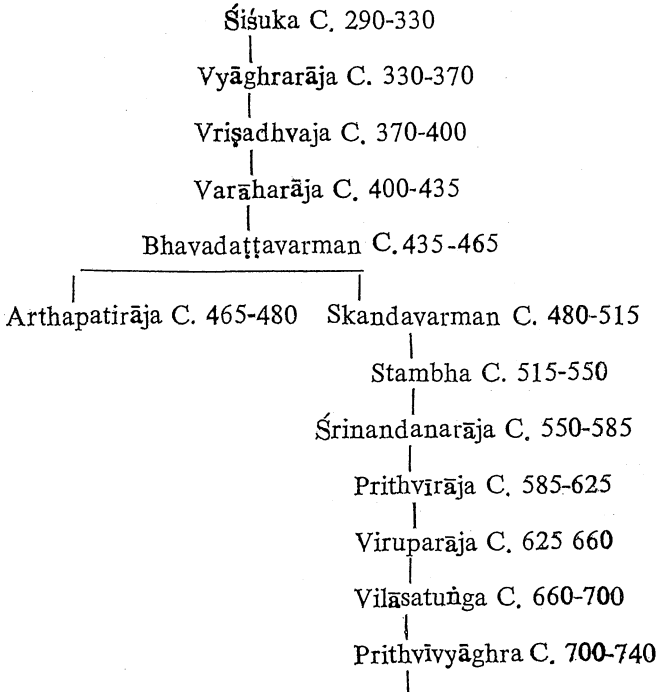
No kingdom nor a dynasty is permanent. Rise and fall are the processes of history. The Nalas like many other ruling families rose to eminence from an humble origin and nibbled down giving a prosperous rule of long eight hundred years, contributing immensely to the culture of Orissa. Through the vicissitude of time they confronted numerous adversaries and evidently survived many a political eclipse shifting their sphere of activities to different areas over the ancient Niṣadha, Kāntāra and Kośala kingdoms and simultaneously spreading and diffusing cultural complex far and wide. Their final fall seemed to have been precipitated by the rising imperial Gaṅgas. However, the cultural heritage of medieval Orissa owes a great deal to the illustrious Nalas.

GENEALOGICAL TABLE OF THE NALAS

PURANIC



HISTORICAL



LATER NALAS

Bhīmasenadeva C. 900-935

|

Narendradhavalā C. 935-960

|

xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx

|

Sobhanachandra Singh C. 1168-1206

|

Puruṣottama Singhdeva C. 1206-1230

|

xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx

|

Present Zamindar family of Dhārkot

V

Administration

Administration constitutes the most important aspect of state craft. The success and failure of the rule and regime of a king or a dynasty of a particular period very much depend upon the administration. In fact, it is the pivot and mirror of the manifold developments of the kingdom. When administration becomes weak lawlessness prevails and the state passes into anarchy and *matsyanyāya* rules, which in its turn brings the very destruction of the kingdom. The Nalas who ruled over parts of ancient Niṣadha, Kāntāra and Kośala kingdoms had introduced a sound system of administration as is evident from their records. The concept of a welfare state as defined by Kauṭilya is amply reflected in the epigraphs of the Nalas.

THE KING

In ancient Indian polity the king played a dynamic role in the life of the country and its subjects and rightly Kauṭilya describes him as the very lever of the administration and head of the seven constituent elements of the state¹. The Nala kings were the main spring of the government and were responsible for the administration. Their authority was absolute and violation of their orders was deemed as a crime against the crown².

1. B. P. Sinha, *Readings in Kauṭilya's Arthaśāstra*, p. 2.
2. Poḍāgaḍa stone inscription. Verse 9—who ever transgress the order of the king, will commit offence against the Crown.

They were the fountain of all land grants and were the supreme commanders.

The Nala kings were assuming glorious and high sounding royal titles such as *Rājā* or *Rājña*³, *Mahārāja*⁴, *Śrimahārāja Bhaṭṭāraka*⁵, and *Marārājādhirāja Parameśvara*⁶. Additional royal epithets like *Narendra*, *Bhutapati*, *Mahipati*, *Khitipati*, *Tripatākādhyaja*, *Maheśvara Mahāsenāti sriṣṭa* etc. were also known to have been assumed by them⁷. From the study of their political history, we know that Nala kings like Bhavadatta-varman, Skandavarman and Bhīmasenadeva were some of the greatest rulers of their age and they had befittingly assumed such glorious royal epithets.

“The Nalas professed the theory of divine origin of kingship and believed that upon them was bestowed the glory of royalty by Maheśvara and Mahāsenā. Rulers like Arthapati frequently bore the epithet Bhaṭṭāraka, conveying the sense of divinity”⁸. Bhīmasenā has been described in his charter as ‘Mahārājādhirāja Parameśvara Bhīmasenadeva’. The Parameśvara and ‘*deva*’ titles convey the sense of divinity that hallowed the king. In the Rājim stone inscription⁹ Prithvīrāja has been depicted as being created by God like Māndhātā to show the path of righteousness to his people. Thus, we get ample evidence of the popularity of the concept of divine origin of kingship in the Nala kingdom.

This theory was very popular in ancient India as is evident from its reflection in various ancient *Dharma Śāstras* and treaties of Hindu Polity such as *Yājñavalkya* and *Nārada Smṛiti*.

3. *E.I.*, XXI, pp. 153-57, *Rājña* Śri Skandavarman.

4. *E.I.*, XIX, pp. 100-104, Śri Mahārāja Bhavadattavarman.

5. *Ibid.*, XXVIII, pp. 12-17.

6. *Ibid.*, XXXIV, pp. 233-38. *O.H.R.J.*, VI, II-III, pp. 97-102. Mahārājādhirāja Parameśvara Śri Bhīmasenadeva.

7. H. L. Sukla, *Prāchīna Bastar*, p. 110 ; Rajguru, *Inscription of Orissa*, Vol. V, Pt. I, pp. 109, 86.

8. Sahu, *Utkal University History of Orissa*, Vol. I, pp. 516-17.

9. *E.I.*, XXVI, pp. 49-58.

In the Manu *Smṛiti* *Rājā* is called as “*Mahātidēvatāhrudesa narakupeṇa tiṣṭhati*”.

We also know from the Nala records¹⁰ that they often dedicated their kingdom to Maheśvara and Mahāsenā¹¹ i.e., to Śiva and Skanda Kārtikeya, the genera-*lissimo* and ruled the state as their lieutenants (*Maheśvaramahāsenati sriṣṭa rājya vibhavaḥ*).

No doubt, in keeping with the principle of divine origin of kingship as embodied in ancient Indian political treatises the Nalas ruled their territory but nevertheless, they were never oppressive and tyrannical. They rather ruled the country in accordance with *Dharma Śāstras*. There was fear of hell for wrong administration. Religion was considered as the guiding principle of the kings and they were incessantly trying to earn religious merit by good deeds and good administration.

“*Dharmasya mulaṁcha yaśo vadanti.....tasmāt-taduparjā-miyan*”¹².

The Nala kings also believed that divinity could be attained only by following the right paths prescribed by the *Dharma*¹³.

In many Nala records there is express statement of adherence to religion, whose violation is believed to lend one to hell.

“*Pāṣṭi varṣasahasrāṇi svarge nandati bhumidāḥ, akṣheptā chanumantā cha tanyeva narake vasatati*”.¹⁴

Thus, the Nala rulers though staunch believers of the divine origin of kingship, were neither arbitrary nor considered themselves above religion and ruled the state on the basis of religious principles and precepts. In ancient Indian Polity, the king and his rule constitute the state (*rājārājyamati Prakritisam-kṣepaḥ*)¹⁵ and each and every activity of the state was revolving

10. Rithapur Plates of Bhavadaṭṭa, *E.I.*, XIX, pp. 100-104 ; Keśaribeḍā Grant of Arthapati, *Ibid.*, XXVIII, pp. 12-16.

11. See Chapter IV.

12. *E.I.*, XXVI, pp. 49-50.

13. *E.I.*, XXI, pp. 153-157, Line 11.

14. *E.I.*, XXVIII, pp. 12-17, *Ibid.*, XXXIV, pp. 233-38.

15. Sinha, *op.cit.*, p. 20.

round the king. All state activities were directed towards the welfare of the subjects. According to Kauṭilya the happiness and well-being of the king consist in the happiness and well-being of his subjects.

“Prajāsukhe sukhaṁ rājñah Prajānām cha hite hitam”.

Aśoka administration concerned itself towards the well-being of the subjects in this and in the other world. Strikingly, the Nala administration superceeds the Kauṭilyan the Aśokan ideals of administration in as much as it aimed at the welfare of the cows, Brahmins and subjects as well.

*“Svasti-go-brāhmaṇa Prajābhyah Siddhirastu”*¹⁶

Similar to other dynasties the functions of the Nala kings can be categorised into Executive, Military, Judicial, Legislative and Religious duties.

1. Executive :—Nala kings were the fountain of all state activities. Appointment of the ministers and other civil and military personnels, consultation with the council of ministers, institution of spies and listening to their reports and giving attention to the welfare of the minors, the aged, the afflicted and the helpless and of the women may be taken as illustrations of executive functions. Army and treasury were under their direct control. The king also looked into the revenue and the expenditure of the kingdom and with a view to increasing the revenue of the state, he was probably taking part in trade, agriculture and industries. Conduct of foreign policy and planning of military moves were some of his other executive responsibilities. As evident from the Rithapur grant of king Bhavadaṭṭa, the idea of protection of cows was cherished by the Nala kings¹⁷. There might have been some regulations to keep certain fields as grazing land for the cattle. Even at present, this system of maintaining grazing field (*gochar*) in every revenue village is in vogue in our country.

16. Rithapur Grant of Bhavadaṭṭa, *E.I.*, XIX, pp. 100-104.

17. *Ibid.*

From the Keśaribeḍā plates of Arthapati¹⁸ we know that he had appointed "Chulla" as *Rahasyādhikṛita*. Bhavadaṭṭavarman had officials like Voppadeva and *Rahasyādhikṛita* Chulla¹⁹. From the Rājim stone inscription²⁰ we know that Vilāsatuṅga had appointed Durggahasti as the engraver. From the Poḍāgaḍa stone inscription²¹ of Skandavarman and from the Pāṇḍīāpathar Grant²² of Mahārāja Bhīmasenadeva we know that Pritibhāgavata had been appointed as the general and Akṛadeva as the minister of war and peace of Bhīmasenadeva. This function is a very important one and it is probable that the officials had to pass before appointment, through certain requisite ordeals. As enumerated in the *Arthaśāstra*²³ noble birth, nativity, health, educational or technical proficiency in arts, intelligence, eloquence, loyalty, uprightness and nobility of character are some of the prescribed qualifications of officials in ancient days. We know from epigraphic records that officials of the Nalas like Chulla served for generations and general Pritibhāgavata was very much devoted to his master. Therefore, it is apparent that the Nala kings before appointing officials, examined and tested their ability and loyalty properly. In accordance with their ability and inclinations officials were assigned different departments.

In the Nala records we do not get any direct evidence of the council of ministers. Since it was one of the essential limbs of administration in ancient polity probably there was a council of ministers under the Nala rulers. In fact, in their records we get the names of general and *Sandhivigrahika*, i.e. minister of peace and war and so it is presumed that there was council of ministers to help the king in proper discharge of his many fold duties.

18. *J.B.R.S.*, XXXIV, pp. 38-42.

19. *E.I.*, XIX, pp. 100-104.

20. *E.I.* XXVI, pp. 49-58.

21. *Ibid.*, XXI, pp. 153-57.

22. *O.H.R.J.*, VI, II-III, p. 102.

23. *Sinha, op.cit.*, p. 52.

2. Legislatures :—In ancient times there was no legislature as we understand it in modern times. There is a lot of controversy amongst scholars as to whether king was the law maker²⁴. According to the *Smṛitis* and the *Mahābhārata* law and law of punishment were divine creations, like the king and existed independently of the later, who had the duty to enforce and respect them. King as such, did not appear as the source of law in the *Dharmaśāstras* except perhaps in the *Nārada Smṛiti*²⁵. In the ancient Indian society, as in all other ancient societies, custom was the principal source of law. Some of these were coming from the remote past and regarded as divinely divulged and so binding. Even in the Buddhist record we find reference to '*Pāveni Pustaka*' i.e., the law book which was to be referred to by the judges. Thus, there is no reference to the king as the source of law, he may be *Dharmaprayartaka*, but not the law giver. *Dharma* according to Sinha²⁷ may mean moral and social order or laws established by sages. Even Kauṭilya does not conceive the ruler as a prime law maker or law giver rather he regards that the prime duty of the king is to administer the law. The king's power is, thus primarily judicial rather than legislative²⁸.

The Nala kings apparently were not the primary source of law but were protectors and promulgators of laws. However, they issued royal orders and ordinances which had the force of law and whose violation was regarded as offence against the king²⁹. They also issued royal decrees declaring certain donations as tax free, which had the force of law³⁰. The idea of protecting the cows and the Brahmins alongwith subjects as per

24. *Ibid.*, pp. 23-47.

25. *Ibid.*, p. 23.

26. *Ibid.*, p. 29.

27. *Ibid.*

28. *Ibid.*, p. 27.

29. Verses, 7, 9, 11, *E.I.*, XXI, pp. 153-57.

30. Rithapur Grant of Bhavadaṭṭa, *E.I.*, XXI, pp. 100-104.

the prevalent law of the land is amply evident from the Rithapur Grant of Bhavadatṭavarman³¹.

3. Judicial :—In ancient Indian political set up king was the fountain head of justice i.e., “*Dharmaprayartaka*”. Kauṭilya mentions that the king who administers justice in accordance with *Dharma*, *Vyavahāra*, *Samsthā* and *Nyāya* will be able to conquer the world bounded by the four quarters. When there is difference between *Samsthā* and *Dharma* or between *Vyavahāra* or *Dharma*, then the matter shall be settled in accordance with *Dharma*. But whenever *Dharma* is in conflict with *Nyāya* then latter shall be held authoritative for, there the original text loses its force³². Further he states that it is the duty of the king to maintain *Dharma* and punish justly the violators of *Dharma*. The observance of one’s own duty leads one to *svarga* and infinite bliss. If it is violated the world will come to an end owing to confusion of castes and duties and it is the duty of the king to see that such violations do not take place and if they take place, guilty are to be adequately punished. The king should not allow people to swerve from their duties. It is the coercive power i.e. ‘*daṇḍa*’ which makes the world happy and progressive³³, and which he should use whenever there is violation. Strikingly we find the total adherence of the Nala rulers to these dictums of justice and equity propounded by Kauṭilya. In the Rājim stone inscription of Vilāsatuṅga³⁴ it is mentioned that “*Dharmasyamulaṁ cha vaso yadanti...tasmāt tadupārjanīyam*” i.e., the fame of the king consists in his upholding the *Dharma* apparently by justice and this should be incessantly longed for. In the Poṭṭāgaḍa stone inscription of Skandavarman³⁵ it is categorically stated that ‘one who follows the right path gets the God and heaven’. There is frequent reference in

31. Sahu, *op.cit.*, p. 518.

32. Sinha, *op.cit.*, p. 26.

33. *Ibid.*, p. 27.

34. *E.I.*, XXVI, pp. 49-58.

35. *Ibid.*, XXI, pp. 153-57, Line 11.

most of the Nala records that violation of law leads one to hell of five kinds, and its observance leads one to find refuge in God. In the Keśaribedā charter of Arthapati³⁶ it is mentioned that the violation of *Dharma* leads one to hell and in the grant of Skandavarman it is declared that the violation of king's order is a crime against the crown and very probably its violation was visited by capital punishments. Thus, we find abundant evidence of administration of justice by Nala monarchs in accordance to *Dharma*.

4. Military :—Nala kings were supreme commanders of the army personally they were leading in the battle field. King Bhavadaṭṭavarman is known to have occupied Nandivardhan by his military activities. Skandavarman is known to have driven away Vākātakas from his capital Puṣkari and Arthapatirāja is believed to have fallen in the battle field while fighting out the enemy³⁷. The Nala kings were also appointing generals and *Sandhivigrahikas* and supervising their works³⁸. They were planning military moves. In ancient days this was one of the important functions of the kings. The Nala rulers are known to have engaged themselves in hundred battles in course of their long rule of 800 years and they must have enough military responsibilities like recruitment of military personnels and directing military expeditions and arming the soldiers with arms and ammunition, horses and elephants and making provision for their subsistence.

5. Religious :—In ancient Indian Polity the king had a number of religious duties to perform. In fact, in those days religion and state formed the two sides of the same coin. In Nala records there is ample evidence of active participations by the kings in ecclesiastic activities. Even Kauṭilya says that the king should pay attention to the business of Gods, of heretics,

36. *E.I.*, XXVIII, pp. 12-16, Lines, 11-12.

37. Sahu, *op.cit.*, p. 514.

38. Pāṇḍiaphar Grant, Poḍāgaḍa inscription.

of Brahmins learned in Vedas and of sacred places as well³⁹. Offerings to ancestors (pitrukārya) were also ceremoniously made.

From the Keśaribeḍā plates of Arthapati⁴⁰ we know that he donated Keśelaka *grāma* to Durggāryya, Ravirāryya, Ravidattāryya, all belonging to *Kautsasa gotra*. The donation seems to have religious connotation. Bhavadatṭavarman⁴¹ donated Kādambagiri *grāma* to Mātrādhyāryya and to his eight sons while staying at "Prayāg" the place blest by the favour of the divine *Prajāpati*, for the blessing of the matrimonial relations of the king and his Queen. Skandavarman⁴² established the 'Pādamula', i.e., a sanctuary of Viṣṇu and donated certain holdings for its maintenance, for obtaining religious merit for his parents and other ancestors and desiring welfare for himself. He also gave abundant "bhūridakṣhiṇā" and directed that the proceeds of the holding should be used for free feeding of the ascetics, poor and the destitutes in a *Satra* of Brāhmaṇas. He had even caused the plantation of the pillar in person. Vilāsa-tuṅga for the blessing of the departed soul of his son built a temple of Viṣṇu⁴³ at Rājim. Bhīmasenadeva⁴⁴ granted by libations of water the village Kurmatālā for the increase of the merit of his father, mother and himself. Establishment of religious institutions, Vihāras⁴⁵, construction of religious edifices and protection of cows and Brāhmaṇas were some of the important religious functions of the Nala monarchs. Discovery of a large number of sculptures of Śaiva, Śākta and Vaiṣṇava pan-

39. Sinha, *op.cit.*, pp., 170-179.

40. *E.I.*, XIX, pp. 100-104.

41. *Ibid.*, XIX, pp. 153-57.

42. *E.I.*, XXI, pp. 153-158.

43. Sukla, *op.cit.*, p. 112.

44. *O.H.R.J.*, p. 102.

45. A *Vihār* or a monastic establishment has been brought to light by excavation at Mārāguḍā. On palaeographic evidence it has been assigned to king Bhavadatṭa.

theons in the Nala territory further testify that image making and their installations were done under the royal patronage. This is also in conformity with the ideas embodied in the Arthaśāstra. Religion is known to have been highly esteemed by the Nala rulers. Violation of the religious orders and precepts is believed to be visited by five great sins that consigns one in hell.

From the discussion, it is evident that Nala kings had onerous duties to perform and verily they were the main spring of government and were responsible for its smooth administration.

The law of Primogeniture

The law of Primogeniture was popular in the Nala kingdom. The eldest son generally succeeded his father to the Nala throne. In the event of the death of the elder son, the throne usually passed to the younger brother. After the death of Arthapati, his younger brother Skandavarman is known to have succeeded to the throne⁴⁶.

Crown Prince and the Queen

We do not get any direct evidence of participation of the crown prince and the queen in the Nala administration, but the probability can not be ruled out altogether. Perhaps, the crown prince designate was called Bhaṭṭāraka and he was allowed to take part in the administration during the rule of his father. For this probably, Arthapati was called Arthapati Bhaṭṭāraka in the Rithapur Grant of his father⁴⁷.

From the Rithapur grant we further know that the chief queen was called 'Bhaṭṭārikā'. King Bhavadattaavarman while taking sacred dip at the confluence of Gangā and Yamunā with his queen Achali Bhaṭṭārikā made certain donations for the blessings of their matrimonial relations. From this, it is

46. *J.N.S.I.*, Vol. I, pp. 29-35.

47. *E.I.*, XIX, pp. 100-104; Sukla, *op.cit.*, p. 112.

probable to think that the queens had some say in the Nala administration and particularly certain religious deeds were performed by the king alongwith his wife in keeping with the ancient Indian traditions.

THE CIVIL SERVANTS

The organisation of civil service is inseparable in the administration of the state. Kauṭilya in his *Arthaśāstra* regards 'amātyas' (high officials) as one of the seven essential elements of sovereignty⁴⁸. According to B. P. Sinha 'amātya' does not appear to refer to ministers alone but the whole group of high officers including ministers (*mantris*)⁴⁹. In ancient polity we find frequent use of *amātya*, *sachiva* and *mantri* apparently in the sense of chancellor or minister⁵⁰. From the Nala records we find the names of host of officers of the rank of *sachiva* and *amātyas* and *mantri* in the hierarchy of the civil service.

Council of Ministers

As we have said there is no direct evidence of a *Mantri Pariṣad* in the Nala records, but there is mention of some of the individual ministers such as *Sandhivigrahika*, *Senāpati*, and *Sutradhara* and from this it is evident that there was some sort of council of ministers⁵¹. According to Kauṭilya the number of *mantries* to be appointed should be in conformity with the place, time and work, but three or four *mantris* were preferred⁵². The strength of the *Mantri Pariṣad* according to the Mānava. was to be twelve, according to followers of Bṛihaspati sixteen, and according to Uśānas twenty⁵³. But Kauṭilya is in favour of no fixed number but according to capacity. *Mantri Pariṣad*

48. Sinha, *op.cit.*, p. 51.

49. *Ibid.*, foot-note.

50. Apte's *Sanskrit English dictionary*, pp. 46, 427, 477.

51. Sukla, *op.cit.*, p. 114.

52. Sinha, *op.cit.*, p. 52.

53. *Ibid.*

appears to be the highest executive body, whose duty was to execute the decisions arrived by the king. B. P. Sinha⁵⁴ is of the opinion that the king with the *Purohita* and *mantri* constituted the selection board for the recruitment of the higher civil servants. The council of ministers of the Nalas were also very probably recruiting the high officials. In the present state of our knowledge we do not know how many ministers were there in the council.

Sandhivigrahika

From the Pāṇḍiā Pathar Charter of Bhīmasenadeva⁵⁵, we know that Akraḍeva was the minister of war and peace (*Sandhivigrahin*). He was very probably looking into foreign affairs and conducting agreements with the neighbouring powers and the feudatories as well. According to S. C. Behera⁵⁶ he was resembling the foreign secretary of modern times. A verse in Mitrākṣar on Yajñavalkya⁵⁷ states that “*Samdhivigrahakaritu bhavedyastasya lekhaḥ*” i.e., the *Sandhivigrahika* should be the drafter of the copper plate grant. This instruction, seemed to have been followed by the Nalas as the Pāṇḍiā Pathar Grant was written by *Sandhivigrahika* Akraḍeva (*Likhitam sandhivigrah Śrī Akraḍeveṇa*). This rule was also known to have been followed by the Śailodbhavas, whose Pārikud Grant was drafted by one minister in the charge of war and peace. According to Sukra, he should be proficient on the four principles of statecraft. It appears that the post of the minister of war and peace was very important one and probably highly qualified persons were appointed to this job. From the Allahabad pillar inscription⁵⁹ we know that Hariseṇa was the minister of war and peace of the emperor Samudragupta. He was also described as

54. *Ibid.*

55. *O.H.R.J.*, VI, II-III, pp. 102, Lines 26, 27.

56. S. C. Behera, *Rise and fall of the Śailodbhavas*, p. 129.

57. *Smṛiti*, Chapter I, Vr. No. 319.

58. S. C. Behera, *op.cit.*, p. 129.

59. *C.I.I.*, III, pp. 10 and 16.

Kumārāmātya and Mahādaṇḍanāyaka as well. He was known to be an erudite scholar. It is probable to think that, the Nalas also appointed very learned person to this post, as is evident from the quality of the writing of the Pāṇḍlā Pathar Charter.

Senāpati

From the Poḍāgaḍa stone inscription of Skandavarman⁶⁰, it is known that Pritibhāgavata was the general. In the epigraph he is described as very much devoted to his master (*Pritibhāgavatanevam bhātrupriya Senāpatinā*). H. L. Sukla⁶¹, by wrong interpretation of the lines 13 and 14 says that Pritibhāgavata drafted the grant. In fact, as pointed out by S. N. Rajguru⁶² the lines in question mean that the ordinance was promulgated on all sides by the general. From this it is evident that the Nala generals were in charge of propagation of the royal orders and ordinances in addition to their usual military duty. In fact, it was very important in those days that the subjects should be well informed about the purpose and contents of royal ordinances, whose violation was visited by punishment. The generals apparently with their well-organised military hierarchy, very well propagated the royal decrees in all directions.

Although the king was the head of the army, he was assisted by the generals i.e., commander in chief and advised by the minister of war and peace in military matters. The term '*Senāpati*' is interpreted in various ways and is synchronised with some other military titles such as *Daṇḍanāyaka*, *Mahāvalādadhikrita*, *Mahāprachanḍa nāyaka* etc.⁶³ However, in the Nala records it is very clear that the chief of the army was called *Senāpati*. Usually very faithful persons were appointed in this august

60. *E.I.*, XXI, Lines 13 and 14, pp. 153-158.

61. Sukla, *op.cit.*, p. 115.

62. Rajguru, *op.cit.*, p. 96.

63. Sukla, *op.cit.*, p. 114; Sinha, *op.cit.*, p. 128.

office⁶⁴. He was looking in-to the day to day administration of the military.

Rahasyādhikrita

'*Rahasyādhikrita*' appears as another high and influential officer of the central administration. In the Rithapur plates of Bhavadaṭṭavarman⁶⁵ one 'Chulla' is described as *Rahaseniyuk-tena Chullena* and in the Keśariveḍā plate of Arthapati⁶⁶, perhaps the same Chulla is described as *Rahasyādhikrita (Likhitaṁ syamukhāḥṇāptena rahasyādhikritena chullena)*. From this it is evident that *Rahasyādhikrita* and *Raheseniyukta* refer to one and the same office. G. Ramdas⁶⁷ translates *Rahasyādhikrita* as private secretary and Rajguru⁶⁸ as confidential secretary. H. L. Sukla⁶⁹ speculates that *Rahasyādhikrita* was private secretary of the king as well as the head of the intelligence department and his view appears to be plausible in view of the close relation of the *Rahasyādhikrita* with the king. In the Śailodbhava records we find the term *Rājasthāniya*⁷⁰ who is very probably equivalent to the Nala *Rahasyādhikrita*. According to Bhandarkar⁷¹, *Rājasthāniya* indicates *Rājasthāna* i.e., near place or nearness to the royalty and as such, it is probable that *Rahasyādhikrita* was the confidential secretary of the king, who was also looking into intelligence department as well. The *Rahasyādhikrita* was taking the oral dictation of the king while the later was on tour in his kingdom and later on reducing it to writings in proper royal records. Even they were known to have accompanied the Nala kings on their pilgrimage⁷². Very

64. Sukla thinks that often the Crown prince was appointed to this post. Sukla, *op.cit.*, p. 115.

65. *E.I.*, XIX, pp. 100-104, Line 21.

66. *Ibid.*, XXVIII, pp. 12-16, Lines 13 and 14.

67. *J.B.R.S.*, XXXIV, I, II, p. 41.

68. Rajguru, *op.cit.*, p. 93.

69. Sukla, *op.cit.*, p. 113.

70. Behera, *op.cit.*, p. 137.

71. *E.I.*, XI, p. 176.

72. Chulla had accompanied Bhavadaṭṭavarman onto Prayāg.

faithfully persons were probably appointed to this post after careful scrutiny and official like Chulla is known to have served for generations in the same capacity. In addition to these high *amātyas* and officials, we find the names of some other officers employed in the administration. The Rithapur Grant of Bhavadattavarman informs us that the royal charter was engraved on the copper plate by Boppādeva, the son's son of Pāddopadhya (*Pāddopādhya putrasya putreṇa Boppādeveṇa Kṣatrimidam*)⁷³. From this it is evident that the Nalas had employed a group of officers as royal engravers. From the Poḍāgaḍa stone inscription we know that the epigraph was composed by Maliṇa, of poor intellect (*alapabuddhi*) and was written by Janturadāsa, the son of 'Chauli' and was engraved by 'Viśvarupa' the son of Aja (*Kalpita Maline...alpabuddhinā-likhitam Chauli Suteṇa bhaktyā Janturadasena Ajena viśvarupeṇa nirguṇeṇa guṇeṣiṇa*)⁷⁴. In the Rājim stone inscription of Vilāsatuṅga, Jalahasti's son Sutradhara Durggahasti has been depicted as the engraver⁷⁵. The occurrence of the names of the composer, writer and engravers in the Nala records indicate that there was regular record department consisting of the above three categories of officers.

The system of maintenance of records in the Nala kingdom was quite in conformity with laws of *Smṛiti* and *Dharmaśāstra*. The Yājñavalkya *Smṛiti* states the following basic principles of issuing charters in ancient India.

*Paṭeva tāmrapaṭṭe va svamudro parichinitam
abhilekhyatmano vaṁsa nātmanam cha mahipatiḥ
Pratigraha Parimāṇam dānachchedapavarṇanam
svahastakalā sampanam sasāsanam karayat sthiram.*⁷⁶

73. *E.I.*, XIX, pp. 103-106, Line 26.

74. *E.I.*, XXI, pp. 153-158, Lines 14, 15, 16.

75. Rajguru, *op.cit.*, p. 98. Hiralal Sukla thinks that Sutradhara Durggahasti was the head of the religious department as well, Sukla, *op.cit.*, p. 116.

76. *Yājñavalkya Smṛiti*, Ed., T. G. Sastri, (1926), p. 10, Verses 318-20.

Copper plate grants issued to Brahmins and others, recording donations were permanent legal documents as in most of the Nala charters they were known to have been granted till the existence of the sun, moon and the stars, to the donees, and as such, they were all properly documented by the composer, writer and the engraver. In the Śailodbhava records, the record department consisted of *dutaka*, engraver, writer and officers in charge of *Lānchhana* of seal and heating⁷⁷. Sometimes the engravers belonged to the vocational class and were given a certain landed property to enjoy as a reward of the royal service⁷⁸. However, in the early Nala records they appear to be a separate class of civil servants. The Pāṇḍiā Pathar Grant of the Nala king Bhīmasenadeva was known to have been written by the *Sandhivigrahika* and engraved by Vāṇasingha the goldsmith (*Vaguli*)⁷⁹.

THE MILITARY SYSTEM

In course of their long political career, the Nalas were known to have indulged in protracted warfare with the Vākāṭakas, the Western Gaṅgas, the Pāṇḍuvamśs, the Chālukays and the Śarabhapuriyās. In many a battle they have won laurels and even succeeded in occupying the Vākāṭaka capital Nandivardhan for a long time, which was made the imperial Nala capital by Bhavadattavarman. In their available records we get the names of the *Bhāṭa*, *Senāpati* and *Sandhivigrahika*, which indicate that there was a well organised military system under the Nalas.

There was some controversy about the interpretation of 'Bhāṭas' which finds mention in the Keśaribedā plates of Arthapati⁸⁰, Rithapur grant of Bhavadattavarman⁸¹ and Poḍāgaḍa

77. Behera, *op.cit.*, p. 140.

78. *Ibid.*, pp. 141-42.

79. *O.H.R.J.*, VI, II-III, p. 102, Lines 27-28.

80. Line 5—(*abhaṭa Praveśa Sarvakara Visarjitah*).

81. Line 13—(*Abhata Parveśah Avahah*).

stone inscription of Skandavarman⁸² where their entry to the donated villages or *agrāhāras* has been forbidden. 'Chātas and Bhātas' which find frequent mention in the contemporary records, are often translated as regular and irregular soldiers. Vogel⁸³ interprets them as head of *Pargaṇā*. According to Buhler⁸⁴ *chātta* means irregular army. B. L. Indrajī⁸⁵ thinks that *Chāta-Bhāta* stands for soldiers against robbers. The *Chāta* and *Bhāta* were source of permanent danger to the people of ancient India. Yājñavalkya⁸⁶ even places the *chātas* alongwith the thieves. In Mṛichhakaṭika⁸⁷ the friend of the hero says that "even dogs would not go to a place where the *chātas*, courtesan etc. reside". In the Śailodbhava records *Bhātas* is used in the sense of soldiers⁸⁸. In the Nala records very probably 'Bhāta' stands for soldiers. It is plausible to think that in the Nala army there were both regular and irregular soldiers of *Bhātas* and *Chātas*. Of course, we do not find the reference to *Chātas* in their records. But it is very probable that they existed alongwith the *Bhātas*.

In the extant Nala records there is no specific mention of chariot, horses and elephants and their use in the warfare. However, in the Rithapur plates of Bhavadattavarman there is mention of *Bhāta* alongwith horse or conveyance. (*Ābhaṭa Praveśahavahā*)⁸⁹ which is translated as not to be entered by solidiers and horses or conveyance. The neighbouring country of Kaliṅga was famous for elephants and there is much possibility that the Nala army included elephant, which formed one segment of *Chaturāṅgavala*.

82. Line 8—(*Apraveśyaṃ Bhaṭaischedam*).

83. Vogel, *Antiquities of Chanda State*, p. 132.

84. *I A.*, V, p. 115.

85. *Ibid.*, IX, p. 175.

86. *Smṛiti*, Ch. I, Vrs. 334-335.

87. *Bombay Sanskrit Series*, Vol. I, p. 223, Line 63.

88. S. C. Behera, *op.cit.*, p. 128.

89. Lines 22-23.

In Poḍāgaḍa region i.e., ancient Puṣkari, the early capital of Nalas, we find a number of memorial *Satī* pillars, often with the portrait of the deceased soliders in their full military paraphernalia⁹⁰. From the study of these memorial pillars we come to know that swords, shields, bow and arrow and javelins were some of the war weapons of the Nala soldiers. They were also using head dress as is evident from the depiction of the Nala warriors. A short daggar of iron has been discovered by me amidst the ruins of Poḍāgaḍa hill fort together with a number of terracotta figures of horse riders and horses, which amply testify that the Nala army was well-organised and well equipped with weapons and war horses and elephants.

REVENUE ADMINISTRATION

From the epigraphic evidence we know that there was a perfect revenue system in the Nala kingdom. In the Keśaribeda charter of Arthapati⁹¹ there is mention of '*Saryakara visarjitaḥ*' which indicates that various types of taxes were collected by the Nala kings and the donated villages were declared as tax-free. There is similar reference to the various taxes in the grants of Bhavadaṭṭavarman⁹² and Skandavarman⁹³ such as '*kara*' and '*śulka*'. '*Kara*' very probably meant land taxes and *śulka* indicated something like octroi duties. It appears that various taxes and duties were the main sources of state income. Kauṭilya was particularly emphatic on the need of a full treasury. The Nalas who followed to a great extent the political system propounded in the Arthaśāstra and other political treaties, seemed to have been very judicious in their taxation policy. According to Kauṭilya⁹⁴, the state obtains

90. *J.B.R.S.*, XXXIII, I-II, pp. 7-19.

91. Lines 5 and 6.

92. *Sarva kara visarjitaḥ* in line 12, '*Aśulkaḥ*' in line 13, *Karapravartanam* in lines 14 and 15.

93. '*Sada kara visarjitaḥ*', line 8.

94. Sinha, *op.cit.*, pp. 16-17.

money from its land, factories and trades. There were various kinds of taxes levied on private cultivators and on merchandise for sale etc. The state also get money from judicial fines. In time of emergency he prescribed that the rich could be forced to discharge their gains, to replenish the treasury. In fact, he gave great importance to full treasury by which the king could equip his army and keep his kingdom secure. It is probable that the Nalas were also collecting all these taxes enumerated by Kauṭilya, and they seemed to have a full treasury to finance their protracted expeditions against the Vākāṭakas and other enemies and to establish temples and *vihāras* and *satras* and to meet other expenditure of the states. It is propounded by Kauṭilya that even in raising taxes, the tax collectors were not to be blood suckers, but to follow the general canons of public finance such as of economy, right time of collection and the capacity of the people to pay. In the time of emergency some sort of progressive taxes was levied on the rich and never on the poor. The taxation policy was to be so executed as not to injure the source i.e. people. Kauṭilya prescribes censure and punishment for the officers who doubles the revenue, because thereby he eats into the very vitality of the country⁹⁵. He believes that the king should not cause harassment to the people, leading to popular resentment by heavy taxation. There should be provision of exempting commodities intended for marriage, sacrificial performance, worship of Gods, ceremony of investiture of sacred thread, *godāns*, any religious rite, *dikṣā* and other special ceremonies from payment of toll⁹⁶. The Nala kings seemed to have followed very much the system of taxation as laid down in the *Arthaśāstra*. We know from their records that they were regarding *Dharma* as the basis of fame and were establishing religious edifices profusely and declaring the donated villages or *agrāhāras* as tax-free. Even though wealth was very important, they never considered

95. Sinha, *op.cit.*, p. 35.

96. *Ibid.*

it as an end by itself rather they deemed it as a means to an end i.e., welfare and happiness of the people.

According to Sukra ⁹⁷ ruler is called a Sāmanta, in whose kingdom without oppressing the subjects an annual revenue from 1 lakh upto 3 *karsas* is regularly realised. The *Mahārāja* is he, whose income exceeds from 3 *karsas* upto a crore. As we know most of the Nala monarchs were 'Mahārajas' and so we may presume that under their rule the state revenue was collected to the extent of crores of rupees. The wide circulation of gold coins by them also testifies to the material prosperity of the Nala kingdom.

Another hall mark of revenue administration is the measurement of land and outlining of the village boundaries. In the Rithapur grant of Bhavadaṭṭavarman there is a clear picture of this system⁹⁸, in the Nala kingdom. According to *Arthaśāstra*⁹⁹ the boundary of a village should be marked by *taḍāga*, river, mountain and *śālmuli* tree etc. The boundary of the donated village "Kadambagiri" quite in conformity with the said Kauṭilyan order had been well defined in the Rithapur grant. "The boundaries of this village are, to the north is mountain, the extreme limit of the *viśaya*, Māluka Viraka, Madhuka latikā, Bakasamalaka with the pomegranate tree and Trimandara Viraka bounded the village on other three sides". It is further, admonished that the encroachment of the said boundaries will result in the commission of five great sins.

The same record also states that the gift village Kadambagiri measures ten 'nivaritana' in extent and it has garden as well. Like 'hala' of Gaṅgas and *Timpirā*¹⁰⁰ of Śailodbhavas, "nivaritana" was the standard of land measurement under the Nalas. Like the *Timpirā* it is not found in classical Sanskrit or Prākṛit literature or any other contemporary records. Perhaps, it was

97. *Sacred books of Hindus*, 1923, Vol. XIII.

98. *E.I.*, XIX, pp. 100-104.

99. *Arthaśāstra* of Kauṭilya, Ed. Shamsastri, p. 45, (1956).

100. Behera, *op.cit.*, p. 143.

the local standard of land survey of the early Nalas. From the Midnapur Plate¹⁰¹ we come to know that "*Gocharma*" a unit of measurement was popular in Utkal and Daṇḍabhukti. *Gocharma* is equivalent to 150 cubits square and it is probable to speculate that the '*Nivarttana*' of the Nala record denotes a unit of measurement of the same order. In the light of the said evidence it appears that there was systematic land survey and measurement in the Nala kingdom.

LAW AND JUSTICE

To administer law and justice and to enforce rules of conduct is a very important task of any government. In the Rithapur grant of Bhavadaṭṭavarman there is mention of "*sarvabāda Parihinah*"¹⁰² which indicates that the Nala had legal machinery to settle quarrels and confrontations. In the Poḍāgaḍa stone inscription, it is written that violation of king's order is deemed as crime against the crown, for which there might have been capital punishment as evident from the tone of the statement.

In ancient Indian Polity the king was the fountain head of justice and so it is plausible to think that the Nala rulers were the supreme judges in their realm. Other judges were usually appointed by them. According to Kauṭilya¹⁰³ the sources of law were *Dhamaśāstras*, *Vyavahāra* (judicial precedents), *Samsthā* (Custom) and *nyāya* (equity) and also *rājaśāsanas* (royal decrees). It is the duty of the king to enforce various laws, derived from these sources, and whenever there is violation, he, by his judgement inflicts *daṇḍa* or punishment. The legal disputes were classified into two major groups : (1) cases between the king or state and citizens, (2) cases between citizen arising out of disputes regarding property, marriage, debt, credit and assault etc. Kauṭilya further states that the court of

101. *J.R.A.S.B.*, XI, pp. 1-8.

102. Line 13.

103. Sinha, *op.cit.*, p. 119.

Kaṇṭakasodhana dealt with the former cases and *Dharmasthiya* courts dealt with the later type of cases. We find reference to the later type of case in the said Nala record. In the opinion of Kauṭilya, judges of the *Dharmasthiya* courts decide cases with the help of witnesses, who for giving false evidences were fined. Disputes regarding immovable property were to be decided on the testimony of neighbours. Boundary disputes between villages were decided by a group of persons of neighbouring five villages. Judges of the *Kaṇṭakasodhana* courts, apart from punishing the criminals, had to keep strict watch over anti-social activities of persons and groups. Often torture was restored to extort confession of guilt from the criminals. It is plausible that the Kauṭilyan system of legal administration was in vogue in Nala kingdom.

RELIGIOUS POLICY

In the Nala records there is abundant evidence of the message of *Dharma* and *Dharmaśāstra* and to its adherence. The violation of *Dharma* is always believed to lead one to hell and most of Nala records duly admonished this to the people.

Pāstivarṣa sahasrāṇi svarge nandati bhumidaḥ,

Akṣeptā chānumantā cha tanyeva narake vasatati

From the Rājim stone inscription¹⁰⁴ it is known that Durgahasti the writer of the grant was also a '*Sutradhara*'¹⁰⁵ who was very probably looking into the state religious matters. King Skandavarman had established the '*Pādamula*' of Viṣṇu at his capital Poḍāgaḍa and with abundant *bhūridakṣiṇā*, he donated certain holdings, whose proceeds he directed to utilise in a '*Satra*' for feeding the poor, destitute, ascetics and the Brahmins (*Satyopa bhojyaṃ viprāṇāṃ jatimāṃ cha viśeṣataḥ dinānāṃ punyatham*)¹⁰⁶. We have said elsewhere¹⁰⁷ that the *Pādamula*

104. *E.I.*, XXVIII, 12-17, XXXIV, 233-38.

105. Sukla, *op.cit.*, p. 116.

106. *E.I.* XXI, Line 7, pp. 153-157.

107. See Religion Chapter.

of Viṣṇu founded by him very probably refers to the establishment of a Viṣṇu *Vihāra*.

The ruins of gigantic Śākta establishment ascribable to the regime of Bhavadaṭṭavarman of Nala dynasty has been brought to light by the recent excavations in the Mārāguḍā valley¹⁰⁸. Inside the sanctum of a temple on the 3rd ridge of the hilly Triśul Vihār complex, the image of a Goddess containing an inscription on the pedestal, 'Māheśvari Bhavaḍā' has been brought to light. The issue of numerous land grants to the Brahmins by the Nala kings fully testify that there was a regular religious department in the Nala administrative set up to look into all the religious establishment. *Sutradhara* referred to in the Rājim stone inscription appears to be a high religious official well versed in *Vedas*, *Dharmaśāstras* and other religious matters. There is mention of 'Sutradhara' in the 'Athākatha' and *Mahāparinirvāṇasutta* of Buddhaghosa. He is known to have been a highly accomplished scholar of religious philosophy¹⁰⁹. The Nala kings very probably appointed accomplished scholar in this post. The *Sutradhara* of Nala can be compared with the Dharmamahāmātrās of Aśoka whose duty was to promote religion in the country.

From the epigraphic evidence we know that Śaivism, Śaktism and Vaiṣṇavism were popular in Nala kingdom and were flourishing together. The religious disputes often arising between various creeds were probably settled by the religious department.

In this age it was deemed as 'Adharma' or irreligious to encroach upon the gift village by avarice or greed and anger.

*Yah kaschit vyāpet dharmo rāgad drohāt
pralobhād va grāmekinchit pralopāyet sa
mahāpālakajuktaḥ pañchabhinnā narakam vrajet*¹¹⁰.

108. Unpublished excavation Report of Mārāguḍā.

109. Sukla, *op.cit.*, p. 116.

110. Keśaribeḍa Plates, Lines 9 and 11.

The Nala Kings had high esteem for religion, whose violation they think consigns one in *pañcha pāpa* of hell. The true spirit of their religious policy can be very well gleamed from the following lines of the Poḍāgaḍa inscription of Skandavarman.

“Who so ever will destroy this religious institution would be consigned to the hell. He who will follow the right path will get refuge in God¹¹¹.

This religious ideal is also reflected in the *Arthaśāstra* of Kauṭilya, who says that the ultimate end of following a religious life as laid down in the *Śāstras* is heaven and endless bliss¹¹².

ADMINISTRATIVE DIVISION

From the epigraphic records of the various ruling dynasties of ancient India, we get names of many a territorial and administrative division often giving rise to much confusion and controversy as regards their correct interpretation and definition. In the Nala records we find the occurrence of *rājya*, *maṇḍala*, *rāṣṭra*, *bṛhadbhoga*, *bhoga*, *viṣaya*, *pura*, *grāma*, *viruka*, *latika* and *janapada* and it is presumed that the Nala empire was administratively divided into those units. Their political history reveals that often their country was far flung and extended over a vast region and it is probable to think that, at that point of time, the Nala territory was called *Sāmrājya*. The use of the glorious royal titles by the Nala kings testifies such a contention.

Rājya

The expression ‘*Rājya*’ is found in the Pāṇḍiā Pathar Grant of Bhīmasenadeva¹¹³ and in the Rithapur plates of Bhavadatṭavarman¹¹⁴ in a very confusing manner. Y. R. Gupta¹¹⁵ thinks that ‘*rājya*’ in the later case do not mean

111. *E.I.*, XXI, pp. 153-157, Lines 9, 10, 11.

112. Sinha, *op.cit.*, p. 170.

113. *O.H.R.J.*, VI, II-III, p. 100, Line 5, *Sakala Kṣiṇḍarisṛiṅga Maṇḍala rājya*.

114. *E.I.*, XIX, p. 102, Line 20, (*rājya simett*).

115. *Ibid.*, p. 104.

a kingdom. It is apparently used for a division of the kingdom i.e., a *viṣaya*. However, to us such a view appears untenable. The expression '*Rājya Simetī*' perhaps refers to the extreme border of the kingdom. Such a contention is very well corroborated since the donated village 'Kadambagiri' and even the find spots of the Rithapur Charter are located in the extreme north-west border of the Nala kingdom. In the Pāṇḍiā Pathar grant the expression '*sakala Khinḍirasīṅga maṇḍala rājye*' perhaps denotes entire Khinḍarisīṅga *rājya* of *maṇḍala* states. This view is aptly supported by the evidence of the Madras Museum plates¹¹⁶ of the time of Narendradhavala which categorically states that the kingdom of Khinḍarisīṅga consisted of some *maṇḍalas*. The high-sounding title of Bhīmasenadeva 'Mahārājādhirāja Parameśvara' further corroborates the contention as he was apparently ruling over the entire Khinḍarisīṅga *rājya*, consisting of a number of *maṇḍalas* i.e., feudatories. H. L. Sukla¹¹⁷ thinks that *maṇḍala* is the synonym of *rājya*. Such a view appears untenable and in all probability *Rājya* and *maṇḍala* are two distinct territorial units, the later being the part of the former, in the regime of the Nalas. In the context of Nala administrative units, *Rājya* very probably stands for the Nala kingdom.

Maṇḍala

The interpretation of *maṇḍala* has given rise to much controversy. According to S. C. Behera¹¹⁸ '*maṇḍala*' corresponds to the modern province. *Dharmaśāstra* states¹¹⁹ that *maṇḍala* is the region of province extending over 20 *yojanas* i.e. 240 km. in every direction. In fact, this term has been used in diverse senses in the epigraphs of the various Indian

116. *E.I.*, XXVIII, pp. 44-50.

117. Sukla, *op.cit.*, p. 118.

118. Behera, *op.cit.*, p. 130.

119. *I.A.*, XXXVI, p. 350 (1907).

dynasties. Sometimes it is found to denote a kingdom. Dahala *maṇḍala* is described in the Malkapuram inscription¹²⁰ as extending over the land between the Gaṅgā and the Narmadā. The Śailodbhava kingdom is described in their records as a *maṇḍala*. The eastern Chālukya kingdom was called Vengi *maṇḍala*. At times, it also means a small unit like a district as in the case of Khadimaṇḍala in south Bengal which is also described as Khadiviṣaya¹²¹. Very often it denotes a still smaller administrative unit. Orissan inscriptions mention *maṇḍala* in varied senses. But in the context of Nala administrative unit *maṇḍala* seems to have been used in the sense of a province or feudatory state. Bhīmasenadeva and Narendradhavalā were the lords of a number of *maṇḍalas*¹²²: As evident from the Pāṇḍiā Pathar character, the head of the *maṇḍala* was called *Sāmanta*. In the Kālāchuri records also *Sāmantas* find mention as the ruler of smaller units¹²³. The Nala kingdom was thus, divided into a number of *maṇḍalas* ruled by *Sāmantas* or feudatory chiefs.

Rāstra

The next administrative division in order, appears to have been *Rāstra*, whose chief was called the '*rāstrakūṭa*'. In the Pāṇḍiā Pathar grant¹²⁴ we find the mention of *rāstrakūṭa*. D. K. Ganguli¹²⁵ thinks that *rāstra* was a small unit, denoting possibly a part of the district or subdivision. So far its position in Nala territorial division is concerned, this view is not tenable. In the grant of Bhīmasenadeva¹²⁶ the various division of the Nala kingdom has been mentioned in order. The name of the

120. Ganguli, *Historical Geography and Dynastic History of Orissa*, p. 31.

121. *Ibid.*, p. 93.

122. See Chapter IV.

123. Mirashi, *The Kālāchuris*, p. 53.

124. *E.I.*, XXXIV, pp. 233-238, Line 8; *O.H.R.J.*, p. 101.

125. Ganguli, *op.cit.*, p. 20.

126. *E.I.*, XXXIV, pp. 360-363.

Rāstrakūṭa occurs after *Sāmanta* (*Sāmanta dināṁ rāstrakūṭa bṛuhadbhogi*). So it appears that *maṇḍalas* were divided into *rāstras* and *Rāstras* into *Bṛuhadbhoga* etc. In the plates of Indrayarman there is mention of one *Kurakarāstra*. Recently, a copper plate grant of a 'Rāstrakūṭa'¹²⁷ discovered from Degaon (Tarbha) region of Bolangir district indicates the inclusion of the area in the Nala kingdom. It appears that *Rāstra* was a regular administrative unit in the Nala kingdom below *Maṇḍalas*.

Bruhadbhoga and Bhoga

Rāstra was divided into *Bruhadbhogas* and *Bhogas*. From the mention of '*Vrihadbhogi-bhogi-Pramukhān*'¹²⁸ in the Nala epigraph it appears that '*Bhoga*' sometimes was divided into two units, the bigger *Bhoga* and the smaller ones. There is some discrepancy in the reading. Sircar¹²⁹ reads the expression in question as *Vrihad-bhogi-bhogi Pramukhān* and Sukla¹³⁰ supports him. S. N. Rajguru¹³¹, however, reads it as simply *Vrihadbhogi Pramukhān*. In many other contemporary records we find the description of *Bhoga*, so it is probable that the expression refers to one unit only.

D. K. Ganguli¹³² puts *Bhoga* after *Viṣaya* in order of importance and thinks that it denotes a subdivision of a district or *Viṣaya*. He cites the example of Sarsavani plates which state Gorija *bhoga* as a part of Bharukaccha *viṣaya*. Further, according to him there is no other administrative division between *Bhoga* and villages. He did not agree with Fleet that *Bhukti* is a synonym of *Bhoga*, a bigger unit like that of Province and regards *Bhukti* as altogether a different type of administrative

127. The grant is yet to be published.

128. Pāndiā Pathar Grant.

129. *E.I.*, XXXIV, pp. 233-38.

130. Sukla, *op.cit.*, p. 119.

131. *O.H.R.J.*, VI. II-III, p. 101.

132. Ganguli, *op.cit.*, p. 19.

unit¹³³. The learned view of Ganguli does not appear to be correct. According to S. C. Behera¹³⁴ "in ancient India *Bhukti* was a big administrative division in sense of a province. For the 1st time in line 24 of the Allahabad inscription we come in contact with the term *Bhukti*, consisting of several districts". We also come across this term in some charter of the Śailodbhavas and Maṭharas who ruled in Kośala and Kalinga almost contemporaneously with the Nalas. In their records *Bhoga* and *Bhukti* have been used in the same sense and Behera thinks that they are synonymous terms indicating the same administrative division. In the Cuttack Museum charter¹³⁵ it has been described that the village Tamataḍā of Jayapur *Viśaya* was situated in Vyāghrapura *Bhukti*. Thus, it is evident that *Bhukti* was divided into *Viśayas*. This view is further testified by the fact that in the Śailodbhava charter only two *Bhuktis* have been mentioned while as many as ten *Viśayas* have been described¹³⁶.

In the Nala records *Bhoga* refers to a bigger administrative unit and is divided into *Viśayas* and *Janapadas* (*Vrihadbhogi bhogi-Pramukhān Yathāni vasino viśaya janapadān*)¹³⁷. The head of the *Vrihadbhogi* and *Bhoga* were *Vrihadbhoga Pramukha* and *Bhogi Pramukha*. The size of *Bhoga* or *Bhukti* was like that of present revenue division headed by the Revenue Divisional Commissioner.

Viśaya

Viśaya finds mention in the Rithapur¹³⁸ and Keśari-beḍa¹³⁹ charters of the Nala rulers as well as in the record

133. *Ibid.*, p. 19f.

134. Behera, *op.cit.*, pp. 130-131.

135. *O.H.R.J.*, II, pp. 2-3 ; *E.I.*, XXIV, pp. 148-49.

136. Behera, *op.cit.*, p. 131.

137. Pāṇḍiā Pathar Grant, Lines 8-9.

138. *Ibid.*, 135, Line 7.

139. *Ibid.*, Line 18.

of Bhīmasenadeva. It is generally identified with modern district¹⁴⁰. The chief of the *Viṣaya* was *Viṣayāpati*, who can be compared with present District Magistrate and Collector. *Viṣaya* finds frequent mention in numerous Orissan inscriptions. It consisted of a number of *Pura*, *Grāma*, *Janapada* and *Vāṭaka* and *Pāṭaka*. From the Keśaribeḍā plates it appear that the inhabitants of the *Viṣaya* had to perform certain duties to the district (*Viṣayochita seha susrusa*). This was even applicable in case of the donated village since Mahārāja Arthapati in his charter directed the donees to do duties pertinent to the *Viṣaya*.

Janapada

Peculiarly we find description of *Janapada* after *Viṣaya* in the Pāṇḍiā Pathar Charter. It generally means a kingdom and the 16 *Mahājanapadas* of Anguttara Nikāya refer to 16 great kingdoms. In Orissan records *Janapada* is described as consisting of *Viṣayas*. The *Janapada* of Tośala included Kaṅgoda *Maṇḍala*¹⁴¹. In the Nala record however, *Janapada* appears to refer to a sort of division of the district. Very probably this means to a subdivision or block of present day administrative divisions. Behera¹⁴² thinks that it refers to rural areas.

Pura

In the Poḍāgaḍa stone inscription¹⁴³ there is mention of certain *Pura*, which the king Skandavarman donated for the maintenance of the 'Pādamula' of Viṣṇu and a *Satra*. *Pura* generally denotes a city or a town. Kielhorn suggests that it might have been some establishment set up for Brahmins¹⁴⁴. It appears in certain inscriptions to have special reference to an *agrāhāra* possessed by temples and Brahmins. *Pura* is also

140. Altekar, *Vākāṭakas*, pp. 300-301.

141. Ganguli, *op.cit.*, p. 43.

142. Behera, *op.cit.*, p. 132.

143. Line 6.

144. Rajguru, *op.cit.*, p. 86.

thought to be the synonym of *Nagara* or a city. According to S. C. Behera¹⁴⁵ *Pura* means urban area. In the Hāthīgumphā inscription¹⁴⁶ of Kharavela there is mention of '*poro and Janapada*' which are translated as urban and rural areas. In Śailodbhava grants the king used to command the inhabitants of town and villages (*Purogadi janapadamcha*)¹⁴⁷. In the Nivina grant¹⁴⁸ we find the expression '*Brāhmaṇa purogoḍi Vaiśaika janapadān*' which means the Brāhmin town dwellers and the *Vaiśaika* country dwellers. The *Pura* of Nala record appears to refer to a city or town or to urban settlements.

Grāma-Pāṭaka-Viraka Latikā

Grāma in general sense means a village. However, there is no unanimity amongst scholars with regard to its composition, definition and position in the state division of units. S. C. Behera¹⁴⁹ believes that a '*Pāṭaka*' consists of *grāmas* while Hemachandra¹⁵⁰ says that '*Pāṭaka*' means a part of village. In fact, there is a lot of confusion with regard to *Grāma*, *Pāṭaka* and *Vāṭaka*. According to Sukrāchārya¹⁵¹ "a *Grāma* is that piece of land whose area is a *Krosa*". In the light of the evidence of the Nala charters it appears that *Grāma* refers to a village and often it consisted of certain other lower units such as *Viraka* and *Latikā* etc. From the Nala epigraphs¹⁵² we know the names of three *Grāmas* viz. Keśeleka, Kadambagiri and Kurmatalā. The former two *Grāmas* have been identified with Keśaribeḍā at present a village of Koraput district, Orissa and with the modern Kalamba of Yeotmal district of Maharashtra

145. Behera, *op.cit.*, p. 132.

146. *E.I.*, XX, p. 79.

147. Behera, *op.cit.*, p. 132.

148. *E.I.*, XXI, pp. 40-41.

149. Behera, *op.cit.*, p. 131.

150. Ganguli, *op.cit.*, p. 20.

151. *Sacred books of the Hindus*, 1973, Vol. XIII, p. 25.

152. Keśaribeḍā Plates, Rithapur Charter and Pāṇḍiā Pathar Grant.

respectively. The later one has not been identified as yet. We have surveyed the modern village of Keśaribedā where even to-day old vestiges alongwith old tanks nearby is found in the vicinity of the find spot of the plate. Interestingly, all around the ruined village complex within a radius of 4/5 km. there are a few small villages with ancient remains. It appears that Keśaribedā *Grāma* of the grant consisted of a group of smaller rural settlements or suburbs. The donated village 'Kalamba' measured ten *nivarttana* in extent. If we are to believe Sukrāchārya, ten *nivarttana* may be said to have extended approximately over 5/6 km. The donated villages were made tax-free and 'abhatapraveśa'. *Grāmas* of Nala kingdom are known to have gardens and orchards of tamarind and pomegranate trees. The existence of old tanks at Keśaribedā indicates that each village had tanks and ponds as well.

The head of the *Grāma* was perhaps called 'Mahattar'. It finds mention in the grant of Bhavadattavarman (*Brāhmaṇa Purogan Samahattṛ*)¹⁵⁴. According to Sukla¹⁵⁵, *Mahattar* means the head of the village. *Mahattar* was perhaps looking after the administration of the village. According to Kauṭilya¹⁵⁶ the villages by co-operative effort built and managed '*ārāmas*', *Sattras*, *Prara* and assembly halls. They also repair and construct tanks and lakes. As a favour the administration used to offer tax remission to co-operative villages. Disputes between villages were settled by the elders of 5/10 villages. Corporate care for the defence of the *Grāma* appears to have been recommended. The village elders were made responsible to look after the property of bereaved minors and that of the Gods and were expected to improve the assets. *Grāmas* were to be grown and to be settled according to plan. Construction of new villages either on new sites or old ruins was one of the

153. *Ibid.*

154. *E.I.*, XIX, pp. 100-104.

155. Sukla, *op.cit.*, pp. 129-30.

156. Sinha, *op.cit.*, pp. 14-15.

principles of rural development scheme. It appears that the Kauṭilyan system of village administration occupies an outstanding and cardinal position in ancient state craft and polity.

The village community consisted of Brāhmaṇas, Vaiśaikas, merchants, barbers, washermen, blacksmith, weavers, musicians, gardeners and reciters. Various communities were inhabiting the different parts of the village. They were rendering mutual service to each other.

According to Kauṭilya¹⁵⁷ 'Gopa' or village accountant was in charge of five or ten villages. He had to prepare a complete census of men and resources, including cultivable and uncultivated lands, gardens, temples, pilgrims, drinking water, pasture, gardens and roads. He had also a register of gifts, sale, charities, remission of taxes and loans etc. He was also to compile census list of dwelling houses and families under various specified heads. In Nala records we find echos of most of these noted aspects of village life.

Pāṭaka

Often in the contemporary records we find mention of 'Pāṭaka' which is variedly interpreted. S. C. Behera¹⁵⁸ writes that there were a few *Grāmas* in each *Pāṭaka*. D. K. Ganguli¹⁵⁹ states that 'Pāṭaka' was a town. To us it appears that 'Pāṭaka' stands for a smaller town in between *Viśaya* and *Grāma* in a *Janapada* (i.e. rural area and was perhaps similar to the unit administered by a 'Gopa' of Kauṭilya). In the context of Nala village system this view appears quite sound and plausible. In the Pāṇḍiā Pathar Grant there is reference to 'Kamandala pāṭa' which appears to stand for Kamandala *Pāṭaka*. In the grant the king is said to have ordered to the Brāhmaṇas of the *Pāṭaka* and other officers. Rajguru¹⁶⁰

157. *Ibid.*, p. 69.

158. S. C. Behera, *op.cit.*, p. 131.

159. Ganguli, *op.cit.*, p. 68. Often it is believed to be a part of *Grāma*.

160. *O.H.R.J.*, VI, II-III, pp. 100-102, Lines 8 and 10.

takes Kamandela Pāṭa as a village. His opinion appears to be untenable in the light of the internal evidence of the same grant. The donated village Kurmatalā is described as a *Grāma*, whereas Kumandela Pāṭa, where from the king orders to the *Sāmantas*, *rāstrakūṭas* and other officer about the donation of the grant appears to be a '*Pāṭaka*' (i.e, some kind of a town in rural area and where the said officers had assembled on the occasion of the royal visit, and donation of the grant). In the Rithapur grant we find reference to Palāsa *Padraka*. *Padraka* perhaps refers to Pāṭaka.

Viraka and Laṭikā

In the Rithapur grant of Bhavadattaavarman¹⁶¹ there is mention of Maluka Viraka, Madhuka laṭikā, Baka Samalaka and Trimandara viraka as surrounding settlements of the donated village Kadambagiri. They seemed to have been used in the sense of smaller village settlements. Bakasāmalaka appears to be a village in one side, as there is no suffix in this name. However, in case of Maluka Viraka, Trimandara Viraka and Madhuka laṭikā, '*Viraka* and *Laṭikā*' appears to have been used in the sense of suffix, denoting some sort of smaller village settlements, apparently suburbs of a *Grāma*. This is the view of Y. R. Gupte as well, who has edited the charter. Thus, it is evident that a village of the Nala kingdom often consisted of *Virakas* and *Laṭikās*, i.e. suburbs like the present villages. *Vātaka* which literally means a garden is often identified with a *Grāma*. In Orissan records it finds frequent mention.¹⁶² *Vātaka* might have been identical with the *Viraka* of the Nala kingdom and as such it seems to have meant some sort of smaller village settlement.

From the foregoing discussion it is very clear that the Nala empire was spilt up into numerous administrative divisions, headed by a host of graded officers with a sound system of

161. *E.I.*, XIX, pp. 100-104.

162. *E.I.*, XXX, p. 41 ; XXVII, p. 35.

administration. The village administration, which is an important feature of early Indian Polity, was well-defined and well organised in the Nala regime. The excellent system of administration laid down by the Nalas resulted in manifold developments and material prosperity of the kingdom. Interestingly, most of the administrative divisions discussed are found in the Pāṇḍiā Pathar charter of Bhīmasenadeva in order of importance.

*“Sakala Khinḍarisriṅga maṇḍala rājye
Paramamāheśvaro matapitrapadanudhyat
Nalodvañsedbhava Kulakamalāṅka
dharābhūto Mahārājādhirāja Parameśvara Śrī
Bhīmasenadevaḥ Kusali, Kamaṇḍela-pāṭṭa brāhmaṇa
purva Sāmāntādinām rāstrakūṭa bruhadbhogi-bhogi
Pramukha, Yathānivasino Viśaya Janapadān
Samadisati”*¹⁶³.

FEUDALISM

In the records of the Nalas and their contemporaries we find reference to Sāmantas and feudatories. There is no precise mention of any specific subordinate chief of the early Nala rulers in their epigraphs. Nevertheless their vast territorial extent amply suggest that they had a host of feudatories under them. Bhavadaṭṭavarman and Skandavarman had conquered extensive territories between the river Wainganga and the upper Māhanadi. In this part, a number of petty ruling families were known to have been reigning. It is probable that Parvadaṭṭavarakas and the kings of the Rājaraṣṭitulyakula and even the Śarabhapuriyās, in the beginning of their career were under the political influence of the Nalas and perhaps thrived under their political protection¹⁶⁴. The territory of Rājaraṣṭitulyakula was

163. *E.I.*, XXXIV, pp. 233-38 ; *O.H.R.J.*, VI, II-III, pp. 100-101, Lines 5, 6, 7, 8, 9.

164. See Chapter IV.

known to have been annexed to the Nala empire during the time of Skandavarman¹⁶⁵. A group of *Maṇḍala* states such as Chakrakota *Maṇḍala*, Bhramarakota *Maṇḍala*, *Khindari-sriṅga Maṇḍala* and Kamala *Maṇḍala* etc. were known to have been existed in Bastar, Raipur, Koraput, Kalahandi and Ganjam regions over which the Nala had their great sway. It is plausible to presume that they were subordinate to the Nalas. In fact, in the inscription of Bhīmasenadeva¹⁶⁶ we find definite evidence that he was a 'great *Sāmatachakra*' being the overlord of a host of *Sāmantas* i.e., feudatories. His successor Narendradhayala was the overlord of the Nāga *Rāṇaka* Ghoṅghaka¹⁶⁷.

The *Maṇḍala* system appears to have been feudalistic in nature. In the *Śānti Parva* of *Mahābhārata*¹⁶⁸, it is stated that the victor should instal on the throne of the vanquished ruler either his son, his brother or any other near relation. This idea is being upheld by other *Śāstras* and *Purāṇas*¹⁶⁹. According to Kauṭilya¹⁷⁰ the victorious king should not acquire the kingdom, offsprings and wife of others, rather he should put on the throne of the conquered and deceased chief either his son or other relation. In the ancient days the king and the conquerors were mostly known to have followed the instructive ethics of the *Śāstras* and it is probable that the Nalas also followed this, as is evident from the existence of a number of *Maṇḍala* states in their empire.

The feudatories used to rule in their territories as semi-independent chiefs and they were rendering certain services, military and administrative and were paying tributes and taxes as well to the sovereign power. Often, they were known to

165. *Ibid.*

166. *O.H.R.J.*, VI, pp. 100-102. (*Anuranjita-a-sesa Sāmanta Chakra*), Line 4.

167. *Ibid.*, p. 99.

168. Vrs. 36, 45, 46.

169. *Viṣṇudharmasutra*, *Agnipurāṇa* etc.

170. *Arthaśāstra* 7, 16.

have issued grants with due permission from and reference to their overlords¹⁷¹. Very probably, *Sāmantas* were not issuing coins and currency by themselves as they did not enjoy sovereign authority. In the military expeditions of their overlord, they were participating with soldiers and resources. In fact, this system was in vogue in our country till the arrival of Europeans. Myriads of instances are there about the devotion of these rulers to their kings. Disregard to the commands of the overlords was resulting in confiscation of their territories. On certain specific occasions like the coronation and other ceremonies, the feudatories used to congregate in the royal court with presentations. In case of royal visit and on the occasion of donation of land grants and other religious endowments, they were also assembling and hearing to the commands of the king. In the Jirijinga Grant of Indravarman¹⁷², it is stated that the foot of the king was dazzling with the radiated light of the gems of the *Sāmantas* of the world, who with their swords in hand were paying homage at his feet. A similar instance is recorded in the charter of Bhīmasenadeva¹⁷³, where it is stated that he was bestowed with great power and ability to control the infinite *Sāmanta Chakras*, who worshipped at his feet (*Charaṇakamal ārādhanābhya...anuranjita a Sesa Sāmantachakra*).

The feudatories were allowed to enjoy their fiefs in hereditary succession, so long they were devoted to their masters and paid their dues. The Parvatadvāraṅkas were probably ruling in Kāntāra region under the protection of Nalas as their feudatories. The Nāgavaṃśi kings were subordinate to Narendradhavalā. All these kings, ruled in hereditary succession.

Feudalism appears to have given protection to Brāhmanism as is evident from the multitude of land grants donated to Brahmins

171. This principle is not always followed. Vinitatūṅga, the feudatory of Bhaumas issued a grant without referring to his overlord.

172. *J.A.H.R.S.*, III, p. 49.

173. *O.H.R.J.*, VI, II-III, pp. 99-102.

and religious institutions, which in its turn precipitated the process of Aryanisation in this part of indigenous kingdom.

CITIES AND TOWNS

Epigraphic and archaeological sources refer to the existence of a number of flourishing cities and towns under the rule of the Nalas. Puṣkari, the original Nala capital was a strong city of great antiquity and busy centre of political and cultural activities. Bhavadaṭṭavarman was known to have shifted his seat of administration to Nandivardhan. Archaeological excavations have revealed the existence of an extensive city on the Zonk valley. During the rule of the latter Nalas, Bhīmapura flourished as the capital city. The various source materials give us a fair idea of the prosperous and exuberant city life under the benign rule of the Nalas. They have all been, now, succumbed into primeval jungle and marshes and have been ruthlessly consigned to the limbo and dustbin of passing time. The extant vestiges are the only mute but eloquent testimony to the one time civilised and cultured life of those cities. My discussion on administration will not be complete without reference to these cities, towns, citadels and strongholds the remains of which are still found scattered extensively.

Puṣkari

The Keśarlbeḍā charter of Arthapati and the Poḍāgaḍa rock inscription of Skandavarman have been issued from Puṣkari. The later epigraph is still lying on the Poḍāgaḍa hill. N. K. Sahu¹⁷⁴ has satisfactorily identified Puṣkari with modern Poḍāgaḍa and we agree with him. In his own words "Poḍāgaḍa literally means a burnt fort and the very name suggests the destruction of the place, apparently at the hands of the enemies. The surrounding of the rock on which the inscription is engraved, though thickly wooded, presents the

174. N. K. Sahu, *op.cit.*, p. 507.

ruins of an old township with scattered pieces of sculptures, a group of satī stones, broken temples and old tanks conveying the impression that Poḍāgaḍa, now forlorn and desolate was a very prosperous and populated town in the past". In the inscription, there is reference that Skandavarman had restored and repopulated the deserted town Puṣkari, apparently some-time after its inundation by the enemies¹⁷⁵, i.e., Vākāṭakas. The suggestion of H. L. Sukla¹⁷⁶, that the village 'Phusgudi' located in Bijapur Tahasil of Bastar district, near the border of Andhra Pradesh is the corrupt form of Puṣkari and it represents the Nala capital city is unacceptable, as his view is without any solid basis.

Poḍāgaḍa is located at a distance of 23 km. from Umarnkot (via Dhoḍrā) and diametrically from Umarnkot at a distance of 12 km. to its south. Poḍāgaḍa constitutes a part of the revenue village Bhaṇḍāriguḍā. Previously, it was in Umarnkot taluq¹⁷⁷, but at present it is the part of Dabugaon Tahasil, which is in Nawarangpur sub-division of Koraput district. The ancient township was located on the left bank of the rivulet 'Singāri' joins the river Bhanskel near Nandapur. In its heydays, the city seemed to have stretched over the twin river valleys Singāri and Nāngi as is evident from the traces of ruins spreading over this part. Nāngi flows 6 km. to the north of Poḍāgaḍa and joins the Bhanskel near Dhoḍrā. Both the perennial rivulets have originated from the hilly and forest region of Poḍāgaḍa plateau (2,000 feet height). The Poḍāgaḍa hill containing the

175. See Chapter IV.

176. Sukla, *op.cit.*, pp. 107-108.

177. In all previous works, wrongly it has been stated that Poḍāgaḍa is located in Umarnkot Tehsil. Furthermore, Poḍāgaḍa is not a village. It is a part of the revenue village Bhaṇḍāriguḍā. The hill-fort proper is called Poḍāgaḍa and it is at the centre of Bhaṇḍāriguḍā. Ancient relics are found scattered all around the hill fort and the revenue village Bhaṇḍāriguḍā represents the ancient city of Puṣkari. This information is being gathered by personal exploration of the locality.

ruins of the fort and the rock inscription rises to a height of 3043 feet. The highest peak of the mountain is $19^{\circ}36'$ and the range extends from 82°E to $82^{\circ}16'$. Bhaṇḍāriguḍā village is located in $19^{\circ}33'\text{N}$ and $84^{\circ}14'\text{S}$,¹⁷⁸. The hill fort with its strategic location resembles to a great extent to the Yadava hill fort of Devagiri (Daulatabad).

The antiquity of Poḍāgaḍa (Bhaṇḍāriguḍā) i.e. ancient Puṣkari goes to remote antiquity. According to G. Ramdas¹⁷⁹, Puṣkari is indential with the famous Puṣkara *tirtha* of *Mahābhārata*, where it is stated that "all places of pilgrimage are pious in *Kṛitayuga* but 'Puṣkari' is sacred in *Treta* age. This place was said to have been surrounded with a fort and a mountain existed nearby containing dimonds. Ramdas believes that Poḍāgaḍa contains all these and so it is identical with Puṣkari¹⁸⁰. He further suggests that the capital of Purāṇic Niṣadha was Vidura (Vaidurya) and it is synonymous with Puṣkara. If the suggestion of the learned scholar is to be accepted then the antiquity of place goes back to great antiquity.

In the *Purāṇas*¹⁸¹ it is stated that Śiṣuka was the king of Purika. In a very confusing manner he is mentioned together with the Nāga rulers of Vidiṣā and the early Vākātakas. Some scholars¹⁸² hold that Purika was the Vākāṭaka capital. This view is not tenable since in the *Purāṇas* 'Chaṇaka' has been mentioned as Vākāṭaka capital. Ramdas¹⁸³ suggests that

178. *Indian Atlas Sheet* No. 63.

179. *J.B.R.S.*, XXXIII, I-II, pp. 7-19.

180. Many scholars do not agree with him. *I.O.*, I, pp. 107-8. However, to us the argument of Ramdas appears quite plausible. The rich antiquities and beautiful location of Poḍāgaḍa in a Kaleodoscopic jungle ambience in the midst of wonderful landscape, lend support to such a contention. *Tirthas* were usually located in such places. The establishment of the foot print of Viṣṇu and of a feeding house for all kinds of tramps by Skandavarman in Puṣkari further lend support that it was a place of pilgrimage.

181. Pargiter, *Purāṇa Text of the Dynasties of Kali age*, p. 5.

182. See Chapter IV.

183. *J.B.R.S.*, XXXIII, I-II, p. 19.

Purika is the vernacular form of Puṣkari and so they are synonymous. In fact the contemporaneity of the origin of Vākāṭakas and Nalas with same Śaivaite affinity and having used similar phraseology in their records, indicates that they flourished in the same region i.e., south of Vindhya and ruled from Chanaka and Purika, respectively. It is very probable that Purika stands for Puṣkari, where Śisuka, the Nala king was the ruler, in the beginning of the 4th century A.D.

Krishnamacharlu¹⁸⁴, who visited Poḍāgaḍa tract and discovered the rock inscription in the spring of 1922, describing the vast archaeological wealth of this area states that "the provenance (of the epigraph) has been described at some length only with a view to indicate the extent of decadence that has come over a country, which judging from its few known inscriptions and monuments, once enjoyed a civilised and cultured life in the early centuries of the Christian era". G. Ramdas¹⁸⁵, who visited the area in 1943 remark that "in almost all or in the vicinity of every villape in this *parganā* (Poḍāgaḍa area) are found the vestiges of ancient civilisation that was rampant here in the obscure antiquity".

I visited this area in the summer of 1985 with one of my colleagues and made a systematic exploration and study of the extant antiquities and relics, which impress us beyond any doubt that Puṣkari was a big flourishing city extending over the valleys of the twin rivulets Nāngi and Singāri in the Poḍāgaḍa plateau. We describe here some of the monuments and relics at length.

The formidable stronghold, as gleamed from the ruins was located on the hill and is presently called Poḍāgaḍa i.e., a burnt fort suggesting its destruction by fire and sword of the enemies. The entrance or *Simhadyāra* to the fort was from the southern side, where we find brick bats and fragments of stone and burnt brick pillars and door jambs. The bricks

184. *E.I.*, XXI, p. 153.

185. *J.B.R.S.*, XXXIII, I-II, p. 8.

measure $8 \times 4 \times 2$ " and the door jamb contains floral designs. A flight of steps leads to the stone slab containing the promulgation of Skandavarman at a height of about 40 feet from the ground level. Here also we find remnants of an elaborate and massive gate-way. Ramdas thinks that the colossal stone pillar supported an arch. Remnants of only one pillar is found and the local people say that elephants were tied to it in remote antiquity. The design of the pillar however, suggests that instead of arches the pillars supported a corbelled gate-way. Here was the 2nd gate-way to the fort proper. Probably a temple was located here as well, as is evident from the pillar inscription and the ruins of the place. Another set of stair case spreads on to a height of 20 feet up to a flat surface, where traces of pottery, brickbats, floors and tiles are visible indicating the existence of some residential complex. From this plain ground a flight of steps now in utter ruins runs to the east down to the valley, where there were wells and source of water. To its west and north there is another extensive flat surface with ruins of pottery, tile, rammed floor, brick and rubble wall. In one corner there exists an iron sword together with a few other iron implements such as nails, small trident and hooks and at present they are worshipped by the local folk. In the north and west the flat rock surface ends in precipitous fall. Perhaps a stone rubble wall had been constructed on these sides and the broken brick walls represent the remnants of the fort palace complex. The pattern of this hill stronghold was very much alike to the Yadava fort of Daulatabad. From this place one can have a clear view of the surrounding area for miles. Even now old vestiges may be seen spreading over the dales, giving the impression of the one time bustling Puškari city. A moat was encircling the whole formidable fortification the traces of which is distinctly visible even now and was being connected with the Singāri flowing nearby. A pond exists near the southern entrance to the fort. In the north, beyond the moat another mountain is there, which was very probably

used as the watch tower. At present at the foot of this hill stone sculptures of Bhairava, Hanumāna, Umā-maheśvara and Gaṇeśa were lying in a thatched cottage together with a heap of broken terracottas of horses, elephants and horse riders and various divinities.

To the east of Poḍāgaḍa hill on the valley of the rivulet that connects the moat and the river Singāri near the present village of Bhaṇḍāriguḍā we find extensive ruins of a township in the shape of pottery, brick bats, broken pieces of terracottas and wax bangles, tiles terracotta balls, beads of clay and semiprecious stone. The depressions running in straight lines amidst the ruins suggest the existence of road and streets.

To the west, not very far from the fortification, a broken brick temple near two ancient tanks¹⁸⁶ may be seen. Krisnamacharlu¹⁸⁷ identifies the temple as a Śiva Shrine. The roof has fallen and the walls and entrance have dilapidated and the entire complex is in utter ruin. To us it appeared that originally the temple was two-chambered. From the study of the extent sculptures in its vicinity, it is probable to think that it was a Śiva temple. It was originally built on a brick and stone platform as evident from its ruins. At present in the sanctum we find a Bhairava image and a *lingam* alongwith a Vṛṣabha. In front of the temple, the figures of Vṛṣabha, Gaṇeśa, worshipper couples, memorial *Satī* pillars are found. In one of the later pillars, a warrior riding a horse and piercing a wild animal with a long spear has been depicted.

To the north of this place at a distance of 1 km. we find another group of memorial pillars. Apart from these antiquities we find here pottery, brickbats, terracotta figures and balls, broken pieces of tile, beads of semi-precious stones and clay,

186. Previous explorers have noticed only one tank. But in fact there are two, one behind the temple and still bigger one to its left. The appearance of both the tanks is archaic and may be suitably assigned to the time of the temple itself.

187. *E.I.*, XXIV, p. 153.

terracotta bangles, stone missiles and traces of houses, *Vihāra* and places in profusion.

These archaeological evidence are duly corroborated by epigraphic references. The Poḍāgaḍa stone inscription of Skandavarman which is still standing on the hill fort in solitary splendour, speaks in laudable term that the king had restored and repopulated the city, apparently he seemed to have adorned the city with palatial buildings and residential sectors and fortification. The epigraph also states that he established the *Pādamula* of Viṣṇu, which very probably indicates a *Vihāra* of Viṣṇu¹⁸⁸ to which a *satra* was also attached. In other Nala records we find reference to gardens and it is probable that Puṣkari was also adorned with gardens and orchards.

With the exuberance of religious institutions, *satras*, residential sectors, palaces and fortification, Puṣkari appears to have been a bustling city of opulence as the seat of administration of the glorious Nala dynasty.

Nandivardhan

Originally Nandivardhan was the capital of the Vākāṭakas. The Nala under the hegemony of Bhavadaṭṭavarman occupied Nandivardhan and made it for sometime their seat of political activities as is evident from the issue of Rithapur Grant from this place. The name of Nandivardhan finds mention in a number of other contemporary and near contemporary records such as Puṇā Plates of Prabhavavati Gupta, Jamba and Velore grants of Pravarasena-II, Deoli inscription of Krisna-III and

188. *Pādamula* founded by Skandavarman is often described as a sanctuary. However, to us it appears to have been a Viṣṇuvihāra, to which a *satra* was also attached. Ramdas noticed a "foot-print 12" long in the vicinity and believes that it represents the *Pādamula* of Viṣṇu of the epigraph. In many *vihāras* we find the emblem of foot-print and there is no wonder that this foot-print belongs to a *Vihāra*. At Rāṇipur Jhariāl even today we find many such foot-prints.

Nagardhan charter of Svamirāja¹⁸⁹. There is no unanimity amongst scholars about the identification of Nandivardhan. Hiralal¹⁹⁰ identifies Nandivardhan with Nagardhan or Nandardhan, located at a distance of 28 miles north of Nagpur and Mirashi¹⁹¹ supports him. B. V. Krisnarao¹⁹² thinks that Nandagaon on the river Śivanāth represents Nandivardhan. N. K. Sahu¹⁹³ is inclined to identify this place with Nandapur, 34 miles north of Nagpur. Y. R. Gupte¹⁹⁴ who edited the Rithapur grant believes that Nandivardhan of the grant is identical with Nandur situated in the Yeotmal district of Maharashtra, which according to him was a wood camping ground.

In the present state of our knowledge we can not say for certain which place represents Nandivardhan of the Nala record. It is probable to think that it was the same capital city of the Vākāṭakas located somewhere near Nagpur, which for sometime became the Nala capital.

Jumlagarh and Mārāguḍā area of the Zonk valley

Explorations and excavations have brought to light the ruins of an extensive township with a formidable fortification, *Vihāras*, Court hall, Palaces and residential sectors on the Zonk valley in Mārāguḍā area¹⁹⁵. On the pedestal of a Sakta deity we find the mention of "Māhesvri Bhavaḍā", which according to the excavator refers to the family deity of Nala king Bhavadaṭṭavarman. The Nalas being driven out from Puškari established themselves on the Zonk valley and we are inclined to identify this place as the capital city of the later group of Nalas known

189. Sukla, *op.cit.*, p. 106.

190. *J.B.O.R.S.*, XIX, p. 182; *J.A.S.B.*, XVII, p. 58.

191. *E.I.*, XIX, p. 103.

192. Krisnarao, *Early Dynasties of Andhradesa*, p. 659.

193. Sahu, *op.cit.*, p. 508.

194. *E.I.*, XIX, p. 104.

195. *Unpublished Excavation report of Mārāguḍā valley.*

from the coins and Rājim epigraph¹⁹⁶. The Rājim area i.e. Bindranayagada Tahasil of Raipur district and the north-western part of Kalahandi district i.e., the Zonk valley area was a *Maṇḍala* state called Kamalamāṇḍala in early times¹⁹⁷, and was part of the Nala empire. This Mārāguḍā valley very probably represents the ruins of the capital city of south Kośala referred to by the Chinese pilgrim Hiuen Tsang¹⁹⁸. From the account of the Chinese traveller it appears that this ancient city was 40 li i.e. 10 km. in circuit¹⁹⁹ and was a prosperous town. In fact the vast ruins spreading over some 10 km. have been brought to light by recent archaeological excavations and explorations by the eminent archaeologist and historian N. K. Sahu and we are inclined to identify this Mārāguḍa valley as the capital city of Kośala over which Nalas were ruling on the eve of the visit of the Chinese pilgrim.

Bhīmapura

Bhīmapura was the capital town of the later Nalas. The Pāṇḍiā Pathar Charter of Mahārājādhirāja Bhīmasenadeva²⁰⁰ has been issued from this place. It is very probable that the capital city was named after him. S. N. Rajguru²⁰¹ identifies Bhīmapura with the present Bhīmanagara located amidst hills and jungles in the Ganjam district of Orissa. This place has been shown in the sheet No. 74A/11 of the Survey of India. The identification of Rajguru appears quite convincing.

OTHER TOWNS AND VILLAGES

Apart from these capital cities we find reference to a number of other towns and places in the available Nala records.

196. See Chapters 1 and 4.

197. Sukla, *op.cit.*, pp. 102-103.

198. See Chapter IV.

199. Watter II, p. 200.

200. *O.H.R.J.*, Vol. VI, Pts. II-III, pp. 97-102.

201. *Ibid.*

Prayāg

Prayāg finds mention in the Rithapur charter of Bhavadaṭṭavarman where it is stated that while staying at Prayāg the place blest by the favour of the divine *Prajāpati*, at the confluence of the Gaṅgā and Yamunā, the king made the donation of Kadambagiri *grāma* for the blessing of their matrimonial relations. “*Bhāgavatah prajāpatihiprasāda siddha Kshetre Gaṅgā-Yamunā-Yosaivedvaye Prayāga sthite*”²⁰². King Bhavadaṭṭavarman was known to have visited Prayāg apparently on pilgrimage after his victorious conquest and occupation of Nandivardhan, the imperial Vākāṭaka capital. Prayāg has been identified with the present Prayāg in Allahabad. From this record it is evident that in the 5th century A.D. Prayāg was popular as a sacred place. The sanctity of this place is well attested by the Rāmāyaṇa, the Mahābhārata, and the Surya Purāṇa etc. and many other indigenous literature.

Some scholars on the basis of this allusion to Prayāg in the Nala record think that Nala territory extended up to Prayāg. Such a contention is untenable²⁰³.

Kadambagiri Grāma

In the same record this village Kadambagiri finds mention which the king Bhavadaṭṭavarman donated to Mātrādhyāryya and his eight sons belonging to *Parāsara gotra*. Y. R. Gupte²⁰⁴ identifies this place with the present village Kalamba in the Yeotmal district of Maharashtra.

Keśeleka Grāma

Keśeleka *Grāma* was donated by Mahārāja Arthapati to Durggāryya, Ravirāryya and Ravidattāryya. This village has

202 *E.I.*, XIX, pp. 100-104, Lines 4, 5 .

203. See Chapter IV.

204. *E.I.*, Vol. XIX, p. 102.

been very satisfactorily identified with the present Keśaribeḍā village of Umarmkot Tahasil in Koraput district of Orissa²⁰⁵.

It is located at a distance of 25 km. to the north-west of Puṣkari i.e. Poḍāgaḍa near the source of river Tel. In search of Nala relics we visited this place in the summer of 1985. The find spot of Keśaribeḍā charter and its vicinity is full of ruins. G. Ramdas²⁰⁶ who visited the site in 1944 reports the existence of 5 mounds of rubble and pieces of bricks and a tank of 100 yards square. However, we notice, at present three mounds containing pottery, brickbats, pieces of terracotta bangles and stone pieces. Every year this place is being cleared more and more for cultivation. The present township has grown up allround the ruined village complex. The tank with its archaic look, still exists giving the precise impression to a visitor of its contemporaneity with the charter. There is a village called Andhri very near to this spot, which very probably retains the memory of Arthapati, who donated the village.

G. Ramdas²⁰⁷ made a trial excavation in one of the mounds and exposed a room 8'×4' rectangular and built of walls 2 feet thick of bricks (18×8×2). The extent walls measures about 2'6". Floor paved with bricks was also brought to light. Inside the structure was found a beautifully carved Viṣṇu image. Another mound near the tank yielded a room with walls 2' high. We in course of our exploration in this locality noticed two more ponds and many sculptures of Viṣṇu and Śiva, now enshrined in small new temples. Their looks impress us that they belong to the same age as that of the copper grant. The ruins spreading over quite a big area with tanks indicate that Keśaribeḍā was a small town having temples and residential sectors.

Palāsa Pādraka

This place is described in the Rithapur Plates²⁰⁸ in connec-

205. *J.B.R.S.*, XXXIII, I-II, pp. 7-19.

206. *Ibid.*

207. *Ibid.*

208. *E.I.*, XIX, pp. 100-104, Lines 13 and 14.

tion with the boundary of the donated village. It appears to have been a neighbouring village of Kadambagiri *Grāma*.

In the same charter in same context Māluka Viraka, Madhukalaṭṭikā, Bakasāmalakā and Trivandaviraka have also been narrated. Bakasāmalaka appears to have been another neighbouring village and the rest places appear to have been suburbs of Kadambagiri²⁰⁹. These places have not been identified so far.

Kurmatalā Grāma

This village is referred in the Pāṇḍiā Pathar charter of Bhīmasenadeva²¹⁰, which he donated to Yajñi Bhaṭṭa, Adityadeva and Agnisvāmī. It has not been identified so far.

Kamandela Pāṭa

Kamandela Pāṭa was the place wherefrom king Bhīmasenadeva ordered to his host of officers about the donation of Kurmatalā *grāma*. H. L. Sukla²¹¹ believes that the former place was a *Viṣaya* or district of which Bhīmapura was a part. Such a view is untenable as we have shown²¹² that Kamandela-pāṭa was in fact a 'Pāṭaka'. *Pāṭaka* finds frequent mention in Orissa records as a smaller division of *Viṣaya* and it consists of a number of villages²¹³. It is very probable that Kamandela-Pāṭa was the headquarters of the said *Pāṭaka* and was a smaller town like that of a present day subdivisional headquarters. This place has not been identified as yet.

It is probable that the antiquity of the find spots of the Nala gold coins viz. the present village of Kulia and Eḍengā goes to the age of the Nalas. They are now located in Durg and Bastar districts of M.P., respectively.

209. See Page 213.

210. *O.H.R.J.*, Vol. VI, II-III, pp. 99-100.

211. Sukla, *op.cit.*, p. 105.

212. See Page 212.

213. S. C. Behera, *op.cit.*, p. 131.

VI

Social, Economic and Cultural Life

Society and social life in any 'culture epoch' reflect the true spirit of a country and its people. The Nala age very much synchronised with the formative period of Indian social system and as gleaned from various sources, there was significant stride in the rich and diverse manifestations, in the vast stretch of south Kośala.

VARNAS

The social fabric of Nala kingdom was predominated by Brāhmanism and the Vedic *varṇāśrama* order was known to have been in vogue. The Brahmins were at the apex of the social structure. The Kṣatriyas, the Vaiśyas, the Śūdras and others, in order, occupied their position in the fourfold classification of *varṇas* or castes. The four dimensional social division was originally vocational in nature. Vātsyāyana¹ who flourished in the early Christian centuries points to four methods of earning money which form the pertinent basis of casteism. *Pratigrahaṇa* (acceptance of gifts) is the standard means of subsistence for a Brāhmaṇa, *Jaya* (conquest) for Kṣatriyas, *Kraya* (Trade) for Vaiśyas and *Nirveśa* (wages) for Śūdras. As would be discussed Nala records very much supplement the above social

1. H. C. Chakladar, *Social Life in Ancient India*, pp. 1-40, 97-113.

picture and gradation. The prevalence of high standard of aesthetic taste in the society is reflected in the use of varieties of fashionable ornamentation and attires and making of varied hair styles etc, and women seemed to have occupied a dignified place in the social hierarchy of this epoch.

Brāhmaṇas :—As evident from Nala records Brāhmaṇas were exerting tremendons influence in the society. In the *Aiteriya Brāhmaṇa*², Brahmins are considered superior to the Kṣatriyas. According to Manu³ a Brāhmaṇa may earn his living by sacrificial rites for others, teaching (*adhyāpanās*) and the acceptance of gifts from pure men (*pratigraha*). In case of teaching and sacrifice the remuneration received are voluntary and so Vātsyāyana speaks that *pratigraha* is the real means of acquiring a fortune in the case of Brahmins. Strikingly all the recipients of the Nala grants were Brahmins. Manu⁴ further adds that teaching of *Veda* was the special privilege of this class. Since they were teaching the people of other *Varṇas*, the Brāhmaṇas were getting some special privilege from the latter as ordained by the *Satapatha Brāhmaṇa*⁵ viz., *archā* (homage), *danā*, *ajyeta* (not hurting the sentiment) and *avādhyatā*. For this probably, we find copious instances of special honour invested on the Brāhmaṇas, in the Nala records. The donated villages are invariably declared as *abhātṭapraveśa* and *sarva-karavisarjita* (free from all other taxes). Further in the charter it is directed that to those “Brāhmaṇas, therefore, all the taxes including gold duly accruing from the place (mentioned below) should be given and (all customary) services should be rendered”.

“*atesaṁ brāhmaṇām viṣayochitahaḥ hiraṇyadayah
sarvepratyayah datavyah susrusācha kartavya,*

2. H L. Śukla, *Prāchīna Bastar*, pp. 122-123.

3. Chakladar, *op.cit.*, pp. 98-99.

4. S. C. Behera, *Rise and fall of the Śailodbhavas*, pp. 180-81.

5. Śukla, *op.cit.*, pp. 122-123.

*asachagrāma āchandrātārakam sthitva sarvakara
viśarjita abhatapraveśa āvāha āśulka servavāda
prihinaḥ*"⁶.

It is also admonished that nothing shall be said against the grant. Whoever by greed or passion takes away the granted land or even a tree of this shall incur the five great sins. Similar privilege for the Brāhmaṇas is also recorded in the Keśaribedā charter of Arthapati⁷. The villages were donated to Brāhmaṇas with great religious fervour, with libation of water, to last till the end of the moon and stars (*āchandrātārakam*) and to be enjoyed for generations (*putrapautrikam*). In the Poḍāgaḍa stone inscription⁸ king Skandavarman donated a certain holdings (*pura*) with abundant *dakṣinā* to Śrī Chakradroṇa and directed that the proceeds should be entirely used for feeding Brāhmaṇas and *Yatis* etc., in a *satra*. In the charter it is duly warned that violation of king's order be deemed as crime against the crown and he who will follow the right path will get refuge in god Vāsudeva. The grants were made to the Brāhmaṇas with the hope of getting success and warding of misfortunes⁹ and wishing salvation for the departed souls of the ancestors¹⁰ and for happiness and blessings of matrimonial (*dāmpatya*) relationships¹¹. In the charter of Bhīmasenadeva it is also implored that nothing irreligious or ill-becoming act should be done with regard to the village donated to the Brāhmaṇas.

Thus Nala charters are full of evidences of Brahmin supremacy in the society and the rare honour invested on them by all other classes including the king himself. "Blessings vouchsafed by good Brāhmaṇas are coveted by everyone, says Vāstyāyana,

6. *E.I.*, Vol. XIX, pp. 102-103.

7. *E.I.*, Vol. XXVIII, pp. 11-16, Lines 5, 6, 7.

8. *E.I.*, Vol. XXI, pp. 155-56.

9. Poḍāgaḍa Charter.

10. Pāṇḍiā Pathar Grant.

11. Rithapur Grant.

as a source of long life and renown. The gift of the thousand cows to Brāhmaṇas is considered to be one of the highest aims in life of a lady, even in the case of a courtesan when she is rich"¹². Of course, in the later case donations should be made through a third person since direct gift of a fallen woman is not acceptable to him. In the *Kāmasutra* of Vātsyāyana, we get some of the darker aspects of social life generally missed in the sacred text. Brahmins had right of entry into the royal harem where entry of all other Nala persons is strictly prohibited. He can converse with the ladies, of course, separated by a screen. Medical advice is also sought from Brāhmaṇas and they are considered unselfish, honoured and honest in the entire social set up.

The Pāṇḍiā Pathar grant of Bhīmasenadeva¹³ records the donation of Kurmatalā *grāma* to Sadbhaṭṭa and Yajñi Bhaṭṭa. Generally the learned Brāhmaṇas were designated as 'Bhaṭṭas' and were provided with 'Vrittis' by the king for the spread of education and culture. According to S. K. Aiyangar¹⁴ Bhaṭṭa *vritti* is usually a piece of land given to the Brāhmaṇa for the pursuit of his calling, namely the propagation of learning. He should be competent enough to teach Pāṇini's *Aṣṭādhyāyī* and *Alaṅkāraśāstra*. From this it is evident that some Brāhmaṇa donees of the Nala charters were reputed scholars who were favoured with land in the kingdom. Other contemporary records also supplement that Brāhmaṇas devoted their time in the pursuit of knowledge and owing to their profound wisdom, they commanded unparallel respect in the society. The sacrificial performance involved proficiency in the Vedas and so the Brāhmaṇas officiating as priest on all such occasions were evidently adept in Vedas and *Vedāntas*.

As priests of the people and princes in private houses and palaces the Brāhmaṇas had great impact on the inner level of

12. Chakladar, *op.cit.*, pp. 100-103.

13. *E.I.*, Vol. XXXIV, pp. 233-238 ; *O.H.R.J.*, Vol. VI, Pt. I, pp. 97-102.

14. *I.H.Q.*, Vol. XVI, p. 380.

society as well. According to Sircar¹⁵ on the recommendation of *Smritis*, the Brāhmaṇas were appointed as astrologers by the kings. There are also numerous instances of this class of people distinguishing themselves as profound administrators, poets and composers.

Kauṭilya, Manu, and Nārada strictly advocated the protection, purity and maintenance of the caste order but in case of Brahmins, however, the *smṛiti* writers permitted for a change of occupation and a Brāhmaṇa could adopt kṣatriya practice of a general or a minister¹⁶. B. Das¹⁷ rightly believes that such a change is necessitated by the growth of Brāhmaṇa population and dearth of gifts.

The supreme domination of the Brāhmaṇas in the social scene of the Nala age is very much testified by the royal records. In the Rithapur charter¹⁸ Bhavadaṭṭa solemnly cherished for the protection, bliss and happiness of cows, Brāhmaṇas and subjects in orber (*svasti, gobrāhmaṇa prajābhyah-sidharasthu*). In most of the records, in addition, it is duly admonised that the despoiler of the gift would incur the time honoured *pañcha mahāpāpa* (five great sins). Of the five great sins, three are, according to Manu, connected with the Brāhmaṇas viz. killing, stealing, or doing adultery with the wife of a Brāhmaṇa¹⁹. Hiuen Tsang²⁰ who visited India in the 1st half of the 7th century A.D. writes, "there are four orders of hereditary clan distinctions. The first is that of Brahmins of 'pure living' these keep their principles and lives continently, strictly observing ceremonial purity". The *Dharmaśāstra* regards Brahmin as representative of god on earth and Viṣṇu²¹ delineated that

15. B. Das, *Orissa : Social, Cultural and religious aspects*, p. 27.

16. B. Das, *op.cit.*, pp. 27-31.

17. *Ibid.*

18. *E.I.*, Vol. XIX, Line 25, p. 103 ; Sahu, *Utkal University History of Orissa*, Vol. I, p. 518.

19. B. Das, *op.cit.*, p. 36.

20. Watters, *I*, p. 168.

21. J. Jolly, *Institute of Viṣṇu*, p. 77.

"the gods are invisible deities, whereas the Brahmins are visible deities. The Brāhmaṇas sustain the world. It is by the favour of the Brāhmaṇas that the gods reside in the heaven ; a speech uttered by the Brāhmaṇas (whether a curse or a benediction) never fails to come true. What the Brāhmaṇa pronounce, when highly pleased (as when they pronounce sons, cattle, wealth or some other boon to a man), the god will retify ; when the visible gods are pleased the invisible gods are surely pleased". Kings and conquerors, lavishly patronised Brahmins through gifts and grants for earning excessive religious merits for themselves and their ancestors as well. Interestingly, Nala kings Bhīmasenadeva records in his grant²² in glowing terms that he donated the village Kurmatalā to Brāhmaṇas to augment his own and his parents' religious merits.

The concept of *gotra* and *pravara* was also in vogue in the society. It is probable that in case of donation, marriage and other religious ceremonies, the use of *gotra* and *pravara* was essential. In the Nala charters, we invariably find the mention of the respective *gotras* of Brāhmaṇa donees. Mātrādhyāryya²³ belonged to *Parāsara-gotra*, Durgāryya²⁴ to *Kautsāsa gotra* and Jajāibhaṭṭa and Sadbhaṭṭa²⁵ belonged to *Kāsyapa-gotra* and the latter were having a *pravara* as well. The tradition of *gotra* system owes its origin to the great sages. According to *Dharmasūtra* of Baudhāyana²⁶, Visvāmitra, Jamadagni, Bharadvāja, Goutama, Atri, Vaśiṣṭa, Kāsyapa and Agastya the eight sages of hoary antiquity were the originator of the system. The concept of '*Pravara*' according to Yajñavalkya²⁷ means '*arsa* or *aśraya*' which also denotes descent or association with a sage and both *pravara* and *gotra* are simultaneously in vogue

22. *E.I.*, Vol. XIX, pp. 100-104.

23. *Ibid.*

24. *Ibid.*, Vol. XXVIII, pp. 12-17.

25. *Ibid.*, Vol. XXXIV, pp. 233-38.

26. Sukla, *op.cit.*, pp. 124-25.

27. *Ibid.*

in the society. *Gotra* and *pravara* are also known to have been used by the people of other *varṇas*.

Kṣatriyas :—Kṣatriyas occupied the second rung in the social ladder. Foreign travellers like, Hiuen Tsang²⁸ and Alberuni²⁹ also assign them in the second position. Manu³⁰ delineates that the bearing of arms is the real means of subsistence of a Kṣatriya. In fact, since early times, the Kṣatriyas are known to have been the fighting and the ruling class. In the *Dharmaśāstras*³¹ it is further envisaged that Kṣatriyas are the lords and protectors of the people. Their foremost duty was to fight for the country and the people. They are to augment the wealth of the state by conquest and for that probably Vātsyāyana used the word '*Jaya*' (conquest) as the main profession of this class. Though they were supreme lord of state, nevertheless, they are not supposed to traverse *dharma* or disregard the Brāhmaṇas. Hiuen Tsang³², the Chinese traveller very correctly remarked all these characteristics of the Kṣatriyas and writes "the 2nd order is that of the Kṣatriyas, the race of king ; this order has held sovereignty for many generations and its aims are benevolence and mercy". As we have discussed, Nala regime was growing with military activities and expeditions. King Bhavadattaavarman was known to have violently inundated Vākāṭaka kingdom and occupied their capital Nandivardhana and marched on to Prayāg for a sacred bath. In the true spirit of a Kṣatriya, Mahārāja Arthapati seemed to have fallen fighting in his attempt of protection of the kingdom and the capital from the Vākāṭaka attack. Skandavarman was an invincible fighter of his age who repelled the enemies and restored the fallen glory of the kingdom and repaired and repopulated the devastated capital city 'Puṣkari' by his great valour. The wide

28. Watters, I., p. 168.

29. E. C. Sachau (ed.), *Alberuni's India*, Vol. I, p. 101.

30. Chakladar, *op.cit.*, p. 99.

31. Sukla, *op.cit.*, p. 99.

32. Watters, I, p. 168.

circulation of gold coins suggests that the Nala kings acquired huge wealth by their far-flung military conquests and exploits. The devotion of Nala kings to religion and Brāhmaṇa was unparallel and exemplary in the annals of south Kośala. The Nalas claim their pedigree as Kṣatriyas from the epic Nala, the great, time tested and legendary personification of Kṣatriyas and Kṣatriya culture.

Vaiśyas :—Nala epigraphic records indirectly testify to the existence of a 'Vaiśya' community³³. In the social hierarchy, they followed the Kṣatriyas. According to Manu³⁴ trade and agriculture constitute the principal occupation of this class. Vātsyāyana³⁵, however, says, '*kṛaya*' evidently in the sense of trade, as the source of subsistence of the Vaiśyas. The view of Vātsyāyana was endorsed by Hiuen Tsang³⁶ who observes that "the third order is that of the Vaiśyas or class of traders, who barter commodities and pursue gain far and near". This class being very opulent although had significant influence in the society. Bulk of the taxes are paid by them. In the Nala charters we find reference to numerous taxes such as '*śulka*'³⁷ etc. (tolls and custom duties). The flourishing condition of Nala kingdom testified by wide circulation of gold coins also suggests the existence of a rich society of traders.

There is much controversy about the true identity and scope of this *varṇa*. Often farmers, artisans and craftsmen are also included in its fold and it is equally difficult to demarcate distinctly, the Vaiśyas from Śūdras. Even Alberuni³⁸ noted that there is not much distance between the classes. In the '*Kamasūtra*' of Vātsyāyana³⁹ similarly, Vaiśyas and Śūdras

33. Sukla, *op.cit.*, pp. 122 and 127.

34. *Manusmṛiti*, II, 156, IX, 326-33.

35. Chakladar, *op.cit.*, p. 98, rearing of cattle and agriculture also form part of their living.

36. Watters, *op.cit.*, p. 168.

37. *E.I.*, Vol. XIX, pp. 100-104, Lines 13, 14.

38. E. C. Sachau, *op.cit.*, p. 101.

39. Chakladar, *op.cit.*, pp. 103-105.

are not mentioned expressly. Distinguished and hoary *smṛiti* writers however, believe that Vaiśyas are levelled down to the status of *Śūdras* since early times⁴⁰. For this, the rich class of traders are known to have embraced Buddhism which offered them a higher status in the religious plane and social level. The spectacular efflorescence of the great Buddhist centres at Sanchi and Pitalkhora etc. were attributed to the patronage of this class⁴¹. Hiuen Tsang who visited south Kośala during Nala rule observed the existence of "100 Buddhist monasteries and about 10,000 Brethren, all Mahayanists"⁴². State and society under the Nalas were predominated by Brāhmaṇism and so many traders of the Vaiśya *varṇa* appeared to have embraced Buddhism which promised them dignity and equality in the society. This contention is further corroborated by the Buddhist *Jātaka* stories. In the *Servanījiya jātaka*⁴³, it is narrated that brisk trade was carried on through the Telavāha river. Telavāha river is identified with Tel river and the Tel Valley was the very cradle of the Nala kingdom. From the discussion it is very apparent that a rich Vaiśya class, some with Buddhist leaning, flourished in the society, in the period under discussion.

Śūdras:—Śūdras, the last class of the Brāhmaṇic *Varṇa* order were considered very low in the society. Through the ages they served with devotion people of the other three classes. In the Nala epigraph⁴⁴ we find mention of '*Bhaktyājantura-dāśena*'. Janturadāśa was the writer of the charter and his 'dāśa' title indicates that he was very probably a śūdra⁴⁵ whose spirit of devotion (*Bhaktyā*) for his master was even reflected in the grant itself. Many ordain earning of subsistence as artisan

40. B. Das, *op.cit.*, pp. 51-52.

41. Information obtained on discussion with M. N. Despande, N. K. Sahu.

42. Watter, II, p. 200.

43. See Page.

44. *E.I.*, Vol. XXI, p. 56, Line 15.

45. Sukla, *op.cit.*, p. 127.

and craftsman for the *śūdras*. Chakladar believes that 'Nirvesa' (working for wages) of Vātsyāyana is same with Manu's recommendation and occupation was usually controlled by the caste in which one was born⁴⁶. We do not find any clear cut picture as to which community constitutes this class. Generally craftsman of various occupation such as *Kumbhakāras* (potters), the *malākāras* (garland makers), the *gandhikas* (the perfumer), the *nāpitas* (barber), the *Saundhikas* (makers of liquor), the *tāmbulikas* (betel traders), the *suvarnikas* (goldsmiths) and so on are placed in the *Śūdra* order. Hiuen Teang⁴⁷ writes that "the fourth class is that of *Śūdras* of agriculturists these toil at cultivating the soil and are industrious at sowing and reaping". In fact, the numerous and diverse working and farming communities constitute the *śūdra* class. The tribals also seem to have been included in its fold. *Srenīs* (guilds) of the various occupation complex sprang up subsequently in the society.

In the documents of Nalas we rarely find express mention of artisans and craftsmen as well as their affiliation to specific *varṇa*. Nevertheless, a careful study of the archaeological materials supplemented by other literary evidences reveals that these categories of people, belonging either to Vaiśya or *Śūdra* order, constitute the backbone of the society of the Nala kingdom.

In the Nala charters⁴⁸ we find diametric reference to a class or caste of artisan called the 'engravers' (*khanakas*). The job of the *Khanaka* is to engrave the royal orders on metal or stone document. The profession of engraving seems to have been hereditary as indicated by the prominent mention of father's name with that of the engraver himself. Viśvarupa the son of Aja engraved the Poḍāgaḍa inscription of Nala king Skandavarman. In the document he is called as one 'devoid

46. Chakladar, *op.cit.*, pp. 90-104.

47. Watters, I, p. 168.

48. Rithapur Grant, Line 26 ; Poḍāgaḍa Stone Inscription, Line 16.

of qualities' (*Nirguṇena*) which further indicates his low status and so he was very probably a Śūdra. Similarly the Rithapur plates of Bhavadaṭṭavarman was engraved by Boppādeva, the grand son of Pādopādhyāya. H. L. Sukla⁴⁹ thinks that the suffix Upādhyāya of Pādopādhyāya is suggestive of the latter's Brāhmaṇa *varṇa* and the adoption of Boppādeva's engraver's profession is an indication of *Karmasaṅkaraṇa* (interchange of vocation). This suggestion of Sukla does not seem to be correct as Upādhyāya is not 'suffix' of Pādopādhyāya. It is more plausible that the art of engraving is rather a family or hereditary profession of Pādopādhyāya.

We come to know of a 'writer class' (*lekḥaka*) from the Nala charters. Janturadāsa, the writer of the Poḍāgaḍa charter⁵⁰ was the son of 'Chulla' who wrote the Rithapur grant⁵¹ of Bhavadaṭṭavarman. Writers were different than composers and as noted above evidently the profession of the former appears to have been hereditary in nature. The *Kāyasthas* and the *Karaṇas* who crystallised into a caste group about 10th century A.D.⁵², particularly in Orissa, as a group of scribes, appear to have some sort of distant connection with the writer class of the Nala age.

The discovery of different specimen of pottery and terracottas from the definitely known Nala sites⁵³ indicates that there was a flourishing potters' community (*kumbhakāra*) in the society. The beautiful execution of terracotta figures (Fig. 4) very well testify to the high degree of specialisation achieved by this category of artisans. The variety of potsherds suggest that varieties of lovely and utilitarian wheel-turned shapes of vessels such as big jars, vases and goblets etc. were made by the potters. This contention is corroborated by the

49. Sukla, *op.cit.*, p. 128.

50. *E.I.*, Vol. XXI, Line, 15. Also see footnote No. 5.

51. *Ibid.*, Vol. XIX, pp. 100-104, Line 21.

52. B. Das, *op.cit.*, pp. 48-50.

53. Poḍāgaḍa, Keśaribedā, Triśul mound.

early Jaina work *Uvasagadasa* which narrates about one rich potter Sadalapuṭṭa of Kośala, who had five hundred pottery industries and many a potter⁵⁴.

The find of semi-precious stone beads⁵⁵ and bangles from the debris of Nala settlement sites and the profuse ornamental representations of the sculptural art of the age amply indicate that goldsmith (*Suvarṇakāra*), jeweller (*maṇikāra*), diamond cutter (*Vaikaṭika*) and bead and bangle makers were living in the society. The beauty culture appears to have been very popular in the kingdom, and both male and female were fond of ornaments like necklace of beads, earstuds and so on. The wide circulation of variety of gold coins in the Nala kingdom definitely corroborate our contention. Kośala was famous for best diamond⁵⁶ and this part is extremely rich even today in precious stone deposit, which very much facilitated the growth of the goldsmiths etc. In the Pāṇḍiā Pathar charter of Bhīmasena there is mention of silver coins which evidently indicates that silversmith also flourished in the society.

In addition to these important artisans and craftsmen we come to know from archaeological and other allied evidences that blacksmiths (*lauhakāra*) existed in the society. They were earning their living by manufacturing agricultural implements as well as war weapons such as plough-shares, sickles, nails, borers, swords, shields, spears, arrow heads and so on. They were also making the fine tools of the sculptors and stone cutters. *Mālākāras*, carpenters, weavers, liquor makers are also known to have flourished in the society of the Nala kingdom.

Although we do not find evidence of *varṇasaṅkara* expressly in the Nala records, yet it appears that there was a marked disposition for such a system. Often the higher caste contracted

54. B. Das, *op.cit.*, p. 58.

55. Fig. 42 and Chapter I.

56. N. K. Sahu, *Utkal University of Orissa*, Vol. I, p. 460 ; Sivaprasad Das, *Sambalpur Itihas*, pp. 102-121.

marriage with the inferior caste and according to Ghurye⁵⁷ the original *varṇa* order of Indian society did not stick to its traditional stance. Sukla⁵⁸ speculates that the wife of Nala king Bhavadatta-varman hailed from the Vaiśya family. The example of *varṇasaṅkara* in the level of the rulers seemed to have similar echo in the general social plane and some of the numerous artisans and craftsmen were perhaps the outcome of such a system. The kingdom of the Nalas was the cradle of the tribals. The expansion of Brāhmaṇism and inclusion of the tribals in the fold of the *varṇas* resulted in an upsurge of social acculturation that bridged the hiatus between the diverse stocks contributing enormously to the building of a synthetic prolific social order.

FAMILY LIFE

We obtain glimpses of other important aspects of social life and living from the Nala charters as well. Family life of the traditional Indian home, which very much epitomises the entire social life at large, appears to have reached to an ideal plane. The glorious family tradition seems to have been upheld by its progenies in unequivocal terms. In most of the Nala charters we find reverberated mention of Nala kings' family connection with the epic Nala⁵⁹. The ideal family life of epic 'Nala-Damayanti' is unparallel in the vast spectrum of Indian literature and even Sītā of *Rāmāyaṇa* fame cites the example of their noble tradition. The historical Nala king Bhavadatta-varman records in his grant in glowing terms the ideal of their *dāmpatya* (family) life and relationship⁶⁰. With the libation of water at the confluence of the Gaṅgā and the Yamunā, the king

57. G. S. Ghurye, *Caste and Race in India*, pp. 2, 255.

58. Sukla, *op.cit.*, p. 269.

59. *Nalavaṃśa prasuta*, *E.I.*, Vol. XIX, pp. 100-104; *Nalanrupati kulāmvaya*, *Ibid.*, Vol. XXVIII, pp. 12-17; *Nalavaṃśodbhava kulakamālāṅka* etc., *E.I.*, Vol. XXXIV, pp. 233-38.

60. *E.I.*, Vol. XIX, p. 102, Line 6.

donated a *grāma* to the Brāhmaṇas for the blessing of his and (king's) queen's matrimonial relationship. A sweet and sacred family relationship, thus, appears to have been the hallmark of the home life. Parents and other ancestors were honoured with religious fervour. While recording the donations, the Nala kings incessantly cherished for obtaining religious merits for father, mother and other ancestors⁶¹. Bhīmasena in his Pāṇḍiā Pathar charter⁶² calls himself as *mātāpitrupādānudhyāta* which evidently indicate his profound devotion for parents who are even looked upon as deified personifications. The love and reverence showed to the father, mother and ancestors (*Āryakas*) by the ruling class had its echo in the other *varṇas*. The name of the engraver Viśvarupa⁶³ finds mention with that of his father; Janturadāsa, the writer of Poḍāgaḍa charter was described as the son of Chulla and the engraver of Rithapur grant. Boppādeva⁶⁴ is mentioned together with grand-father Pāddo-pādhyāya. All these instances go to prove that in the family, parents and ancestors had exemplary impact and are a constant source of inspiration for the sons and daughters. Another salient feature of the family life of this age is the joint family system. The donees of Nala grants are mostly mentioned together with their brothers or sons. In the Keśaribeḍā charter of Arthapati it is mentioned "*Kautsasagotrāya Durgāryya Ravirāryya Ravidatṭāryya putrapautikam*"⁶⁵, which indicates that the three donees were apparently brothers living in one family and the donation is to be enjoyed in common even by the succeeding generations (*putrapautikam*). Similarly the Rithapur charter was donated to a joint family of Mātrā-dhyāryya and his eight sons⁶⁶. Arthapati was succeeded by

61. *Ibid.*, Vol. XXI, pp. 153-158.

62. *E.I.*, Vol. XXXIV, pp. 133-38.

63. See verses 12, 13 of Poḍāgaḍa grant.

64. See Line 26.

65. *E.I.*, Vol. XXVIII, p. 16, Line 4.

66. *Ibid.*, Vol. XIX, p. 102.

his brother Skandavarman. All these evidences indicate that the joint family system was popular in the society and an ideal family consisting of brothers, sisters and sons etc. was a harmonious and honeyed entity with immense love for the youngers and reverence for the elders.

AESTHETIC CULTURE

Nala age appears to have received the impress of a rich and refine aesthetic culture. The charming sculptural settings, reference to various beauty and flowering plants in the epigraphs⁶⁷ and the use of wide variety of attires and ornaments furnish a vivid and beautiful picture of aesthetic aspects and the prevailing manifold fashions of the day. This aesthetic culture was interestingly popular among both the men and women in the period of our discussion.

The use of ornaments by the men and women was very popular in the society of the Nala kingdom as evident from the epigraphic mention⁶⁸ of *alaṅkāra*, *bhūṣana* and *chudāmaṇi* etc. as well as from sculptural representation of varieties of ornaments such as *hāra*, *kirita*, *mukuta*, *kuṇḍala*, *bhūjabandha*, *kaṅkaṇa*, and *mekhalā*. Of these the necklace (Fig. 42) generally of two sizes, a long and short ones, is mostly seen adorning the various sculptures. The short beaded *hāra* adorned the neck portion while the long ones hang upto the chest and sometimes upto the belly as well. *Mālās* were made of semi-precious stone beads of rectangular, circular, oval and cylindrical shapes etc. The wide availability of precious stones such as jasper, agate, carnelian and chalcedony etc. in this part together with the discovery of finished and unfinished beads from the Nala settlement sites definitely prove the use of this kind of necklace by the people. The circulation of gold and silver coins in the Nala kingdom, further indicates gold and silver were also used for making necklaces. People were using ear-studs and ear-

67. *Ibid.*, pp. 100-104. Also see Sukla, *op.cit.*, pp. 135-36.

68. *E.I.*, Vol. XXXIV, pp. 233-38; *Ibid.*, Vol. XXVI, p. 49.

rings (Figs. 41 and 43). The studs are attached on the lower tip of the ear by a hook while a circular ring hangs down singularly and often a circular stud is hanged with a chain from the ear (Fig. 48).

Bangles are known to have been used exclusively by the women. As evident from the illustrations (Fig. 6) two to four bangles appear to have been worn in their hands by the women of this age. The discovery of bangles⁶⁹ from the capital sites of Nalas together with *Sati* stones containing raised hand relics of women with bangles indicates beyond any shadow of doubt that like the present day, the use of bangles was a 'must' in the age of the Nalas. The materials used for bangles seem to have been lacquer, vitreous material as well as glass. The specimens are beautifully coloured with various shades and after centuries of its manufacture, even today, the specimen retains its lustre. In addition to bangles, bracelets (Fig. 49) are also worn by the women class as attested by sculptures. The men decorated their hands with wrist bands and armlets (Figs. 2 and 25). Men and women adorned themselves with beautiful girdles (Figs. 47 and 52). In case of the former perhaps girdles are used as a sort of belt on the waist, to fasten the garments. In the sculptural representations, the outer girdles (Fig. 52) of the female figures are executed excellently with various ornamental linear bands. The illustration (Fig. 51) indicates that an inner simple and thin girdle was being worn by the women as well.

The sculptures of the period show various modes of hair dress. Hair, lavishly grown by men as well as women were beautifully arranged in several ways. The ladies often split their hair in the centre into two parts ending in beautiful plaits. Often the hair was combed behind and tied in a knot. In some instances the hair-locks were gathered on the top and tied into a knot and a pearl or flower string is fastened round the hairdo. In many sculptures we notice that the hair is combed backward

69. In course of our exploration of the Poḍāgaḍa area, pieces of bangles along with beads have been discovered by us.

almost in a lock ending in a prominent knot swinging leftward on the shoulder. Men generally comb their hairs upward and tie it atop. Often they comb the hair backward and tie it in a knot either on the side or at the back, and cover the same with a coiffure (Fig. 45). Illustration (Fig. 1) shows that a tapering cap truncated at the top was put on the head as well.

Regarding dress we do not find any express evidence in the Nala epigraphs. Nevertheless, the sculptures cast a vivid picture of the variety of costumes of this age. The men generally wore two garments. The lower garment (*vāśas*, *vastra* or *antariya*) consisted of *kachhābadha* or *dhōti*. According to R. L. Mitra⁷⁰ there is no marked difference in the mode of wearing *dhōti* now and then. To secure it a scarf is made on the loin and folded strips, one in front and the other one passing between the legs is tucked behind. The garment often extends upto the ankle (Fig. 24) looking like a tight fitted trouser. A belt or a girdle is put round the waist with a strip hanging down. Upper garment consists of a *uttariya* (a wrap). In several manner it covers the upper part of the body. According to B. Das⁷¹ "it is generally worn across the chest, covering the left shoulder with its end falling on the waist. Thus, the right half of the chest and also the right shoulder are left bare." Vātsyāyana⁷² informs that the upper garment is often highly scented with rich perfumes of flowers, particularly by the *nāgarakas* (city dwellers).

The drapery of the ladies generally consists of lower and a upper garment (*antariya* and *uttariya*). The *sādi* usually forms the antariya⁷³. The *sādi* is worn in various styles as indicated by the sculptures. One portion of the *sādi* wraps round the loin slinging upto ankle in many cases and often a beautiful folded strip is hanged in between the legs in front (Fig. 50).

70. R. L. Mitra, *Antiquities of Orissa*, Vol. I, Plate XXII, Fig. 36.

71. B. Das, *op.cit.*, p. 137.

72. Chakladar, *op.cit.*, p. 156.

73. B. Das, *op.cit.*, p. 138.

The other portion of the *sādi* is thrown over the chest in a strip, often between the breast and leaving the bosom totally or partially uncovered (Figs. 50, 52 and 53). Sometimes the ladies are shown wearing a short loin cloth super-imposed with an ornamental and decorated girdle (Fig. 53). A scarf is often spread over the upper part in varied designs and in few cases one end of the *sādi* constitute the upper garment. The exposition of the bosom appears to have been the fashion of drapery of the day and therefore, there is nothing like nudity, obscenity or immodesty in it. In addition the ladies put on a tight fitted under-garment round the loin (Fig. 51). From other records and literary sources it is known that varieties of cosmetics also formed the part of aesthetic and beauty paraphernalia of both men and women of this age. The illustration (Fig. 53) showing a lady applying *sindura* or *kumkuma* on the forehead in one hand and holding the mirror in the other ones supplements the popularity of cosmetic culture. Other cosmetic items of this age such as *alaktaka* (red dye) was used both in limbs and lips. Very interestingly, Vātsyāyana⁷⁴ informs that the *nāgarakas* (city dweller men) also apply collyrium made of various substances in the eyes, *alaktaka* on the lips and fragrant ointment made of sandal wood paste on the body for enhancing their personal charm and embellishment. Thus, in the society of this epoch, people seem to have cultivated a fine aesthetic taste for physical decoration and graceful appearance.

FOOD AND DRINK

Nala records as well as contemporary records refer to the various items of food and drink. The vast stretch of south Kośala full of forests was exceptionally rich and fertile. Excellent variety of rice grows profusely, even today in this part. The forests are full of fruits trees like mango, banana, guava and date palms etc. of both wild and domesticated variety. Hiuen

74. Chakladar, *op.cit.*, p. 156.

Tsang⁷⁵ who visited this country also attests this and says that "this country... (Kośāla) was surrounded by mountains and was a succession of woods and marshes. The soil of the country was rich and fertile." In Nala records although there is no specific mention of any cereal it appears that the general menu of people consists of rice, various fruits, roots, different vegetables and animal and birds' flesh. Milk and wine etc. are some of the popular items of drink of this period as is evident from their mention in inscriptions⁷⁶.

The society under the Nalas was essentially agrarian and it appears that rice was profusely produced and varieties of food-stuffs such as plain rice, scented rice, cakes and rice stuffed with milk and cooked with ghee were prepared, Śrī Harṣa⁷⁷ in his *Naiṣadhacharita* speaks of "fine white hot cooked rice, emitting appetising flavour". In the inscription of Somavarṁśī king we find reference to white rice⁷⁸, which evidently indicates the popularity of fine white rice in the society of south Kośāla.

Cows find mention in the Rithapur charter of Bhavadatṭavarman⁷⁹. The king sincerely cherished for the prosperity and well being of the kingdom, alongwith the Brāhmaṇas and the subjects. In other inscription milk is mentioned which testifies that it was a popular article of drink. Very probably many other delicacies were prepared from it.⁸⁰ 'Madhuka' tree is referred in the charter of Bhavadatṭavarman⁸¹. Wine was generally made from 'madhuka' flowers and it appears that liquor was made out of this. *Pañchamakāra* mode or worship was in vogue for propitiation of yoginis and other ramification of Śakti⁸². Many plastic representations with wine cup in the

75. Watters, II, p. 200.

76. *E.I.*, Vol. XXVI, pp. 49-58 ; Vol. XIX, pp. 100-104.

77. *Naiṣadhacharita*, XVI, 71.

78. *E.I.*, Vol. XXXI, p. 197.

79. *Ibid.*, Vol. XIX, p. 103.

80. B. Das, *op.cit.*, p. 126.

81. *E.I.*, Vol. XIX, p. 103, Line 9.

82. B. Das, *op.cit.*, p. 131.

hands of the figures are found in this area. In records⁸³ of other dynasties *saunkdhikas* (brewers) are mentioned. Even today, people of this region are very fond of wine made of mahuwa (Madhuka) flowers and, therefore, it may not be unreasonable to think that drinking of wine was fascinating for people of different sections of the society. Drinking of water is essential for existence. In ancient times, wells and ponds were lavishly excavated⁸⁴ for providing pure drinking water. At Nala settlement sited we find old tanks and traces of wells, evidently indicating the arrangement for healthy drinking water. The hunting scenes in sculptures and the find of terracotta balls from Podagaḍa area indicate that various jungle games and birds were hunted for flesh. The sacrifice of animals referred to in the inscriptions further suggest the meat eating habit of the people. The representation of fish in the hands of the Tāntric figures may be an indication of fish eating habit of a section of the society. Thus, both the vegetarian and non-vegetarian dishes seemed to have been popular in the society. Nala king Skandavarman⁸⁵ set up a *satra* (alm house) and donated a holding for its maintenance and directed that the proceeds (from the holdings) should be entirely used for feeding the Brāhmanas, ascetics, poor and the destitutes. In such alm-houses, the vegetarian food was generally supplied. White rice and milk seem to have been some of the principal food stuffs in this kind of *satras*. We come to know of this existence of *Vihāras* or monastic establishment from excavations⁸⁶, where similar food seem to have been in vogue. Enough food stuffs, thus, known to have been produced in the society to maintain free feeding centres and monasteries in the Nala kingdom. The prosperous condition and the tall stature of the people of south Kośala

83. *Ibid.*

84. *Ibid.*, p. 135,

85. *Ibid.*

86. *E I.*, Vol. XXI, p. 156.

87. See Chapter on Religion.

described by Hiuen Tsang⁸⁸ suggest that people in the society were capable enough to afford for a rich variety of balanced food for a healthy physical growth of good stature.

ENTERTAINMENT

The sculptures⁸⁹ reveal that dance and music were some of the sources of amusement in the society. Both men and women were adept in this art and musical instruments like drums and pipes were known to have been used in orchestra. In the Somavamśi inscription⁹⁰, there is reference to 'dramas' which indicates that theatrical performance was a favourite pastime and source of entertainment of the people. The find of terracotta balls from the Nala settlement sites and representations of hunting scene in plastic works, indicate that hunting of birds and animals was as a popular pastime. The rich variety of fauna of Kośala presented a wide field for hunting. Rearing of pets was a delightful indoor pastime in the society. The ladies seemed to have been very fond of taming pet birds like parrot⁹¹. Dice which finds mention in the *Naiṣadha-charita*⁹², *Arthaśāstra*⁹³, Tāntrik literature⁹⁴ and many other literary works of ancient and early medieval periods appears to have another popular indoor game item of the society. Love-making⁹⁵ (Fig. 51) between men and women marked with erotic as well as religious⁹⁶ feeling was an important aspect of personal amusement in the society. Vātsyāyana⁹⁷, who

88. Watters, II, p. 200.

89. Figure 45.

90. B. Das, *op.cit.*, p. 148.

91. Figures 34 and 35 ; B. Das, *op.cit.*

92. *Naiṣadhacharita*, VI, 71.

93. *Arthaśāstra*, pp. 222-223.

94. K. M. Mahapatra, *Charyā Gitikā*, p. 49.

95. Figure 51.

96. *Dharma*, *artha*, and *kāma* are considered three great ideals of life. The fulfilment of the three leads to *mokṣa* or salvation.

97. Chakladhar, *op.cit.*, pp. 41-96, 165-171, 204-212.

flourished in the early Christian centuries about various *desyopachāras* (local customs) pertaining to love-making prevalent in the various parts of India including *Danḍaka* and *Dakṣiṇāpatha*. He presents a vivid picture of the different aspects of *Kāma* life of the people. The gay life of *Nāgarakas* and the ladies reveal that sexual pleasure was an elementary and exhilarating source of entertainment. In fact an ideal life as ordained in the *śāstras*, consists of the harmonious blending of the three elements viz. *dharma*, *artha* and *kāma* and the righteous fulfilment of the three leads to eternal *mokṣa*⁹⁸.

Beside many feasts and festivals such as *samāja*, *jātrā*, *gosthis* (social gatherings) etc. connected with religious and social life of the people seem to have been some of the other social delights and merry-making of this period.

POSITION OF WOMEN

Inscriptions⁹⁹ reveal that woman enjoyed a lovable and respectable status in the society of this period. As for example, king Bhavadaṭṭavarman took sacred bath at the confluence of Gaṅgā and Yamunā with his wife Achali Bhaṭṭārikā. Sirkar¹⁰⁰ suggests that king and queen visited Prayāga on the eve of their marriage. Very probably nuptial knots were tied on such sacred sites. Skandavarman in his inscription¹⁰¹ sincerely solicited for the salvation of the soul of his mother along with other ancestors. These instances amply suggest the prominent status of women both as wife and mother. 'Bhaṭṭārikā' title of the queen further indicates the religious status of the ladies. Though there is no recorded instance of women rule in the Nala kingdom, yet it seems that some amount of influence was exerted by the women in the State administration as Bhaṭṭārika or chief queen of the king.

98. *Ibid.*, pp. 310-312.

99. *E.I.*, Vol. XIX, pp. 102-3; Vol. XXI, pp. 155-56.

100. See Chapter 4.

101. *E.I.*, Vol. XXI, pp. 155-156, Verses 2-4.

The wide discovery of memorial *Satī* pillars¹⁰² from the Nala territory suggests that the practice of *Satī* was in vogue in the society. Somavamśī king Tivaradeva in his Rājīm grant¹⁰³ declares that he takes pleasure in capturing the women-folk of the vanquished and even indulging in dalliance with them. Very probably the fear of violation of chastity and carrying away of the wives of the vanquished by the victor compelled the women to perform *Satī*. However, this practice was confined to the people of Kṣatriya and Brāhmaṇa castes.

Concubinage and polygamy was widely in vogue in ancient India. The reference to one hundred ladies offering lamps to God for Somavamśī king Mahāśivagupta's well being and fame suggests that the kings were having many wives and concubines in the period under review¹⁰⁴. Courtesans (*gaṇikās*) because of their accomplished personal charms, amicable disposition, knowledge of sixtyfour arts and high intellectual attainments, though a public woman received a place of honour in the assemblies of men. Some of the *gaṇikās* owing to their striking pre-eminence and accomplishment have become legendary characters. Almost every town is known to have courtesans in ancient times¹⁰⁵. In the Sonepur plates of Janmejaya Mahābhavagupta¹⁰⁷ it is recorded that "numerous excellent courtesans making sound by the jingle of their anklets and moving within the enclosures of mansions" of the capital city. All these suggest that a class of courtesans flourished in the society enjoying quite a good status. Though there is no express information on the education of women in the Nala documents, yet it seems that some of the ladies especially, in the ruling class were well versed in various branches of arts and

102. Many pillars found at Poḍāgaḍa are ascribed to Nala period. In other parts of South Kośala also such pillars are found.

103. B. Das, *op.cit.*, p. 93.

104. *Ibid.*, p. 91.

105. Chakladhar, *op.cit.*, p. 198.

106. J. Richardson, *The Courtesans*, p. 1.

107. Rajguru, *Inscriptions of Orissa*, Vol. IV, pp. 135, 1-6.

lores as is testified by supplementary evidences of literature and art works. Lakṣmīkarā¹⁰⁸ the sister of Indrabhūti and the daughter-in-law of Jalendra "was a famous luminary of Tantric Buddhism and she is also revered as one of the 84 *siddhas*". She is known to have been flourished in south Kośala¹⁰⁹. Vasaṭā¹¹⁰, the mother of Somavarṁśī king Mahāśivagupta was adept in vedic lore. The work of Vātsyāyana¹¹¹ also supplements that some of the women were well-versed in various branches of knowledge and so it appears quite plausible that women received some sort of regular education especially in the higher strata of the society. Thus, in general, women occupied a lovable and honourable place in the social plane.

108. N. K. Sahu, *Buddhism in Orissa*, p. 167.

109. *Ibid.*

110. Rajguru, *op.cit.*, Vol. IV, p. 77.

111. Chakladhar, *op.cit.*, pp. 180-181.

VII

Religion

The Nala age witnessed the outburst of great religious activities. Śaivism, Vaiṣṇavism and Śaktism flourished in their various aspects making this period a golden era of cultural efflorescence as gleaned from the epigraphic, literary and archaeological evidence galore. Roughly, the Nalas ruled from 4th century A.D. down to 10th century A.D. over a vast kingdom in different parts of the traditional south Kośala. A close study of the extant materials of this part enable us to have a peep into the contemporary religious centres, thought and practices. Some of the contemporary dynasties such as the Śailodbhavas, the Śarabhapuriyās, the Vākātakas and the Pānduvamśis were known to have basically patronised a particular religion. But in sharp contrast, in the Nala empire Śaivism, Vaiṣṇavism and Śaktism the “great trio” of Brāhmanical system thrived un-abated and received equal attention and patronage of the benign Nala rulers. Some of the famous ‘*tīrthas*’ of ancient time which very much influenced the religious life of the people developed in their territory. In fact, the Nalas esteemed religion fervently and believed that their fame consists in promoting and upholding *dharma*. This noble idea is very much reflected even in their records.

*Dharmasya mulaṁ cha yaśo vadanti
Tasmāt tadupārjaniyaṁ*¹.

1. *E.I.*, Vol. XXVI, pp. 49-50.

ŚAIVISM

The early Nala kings were preeminently worshippers of Śiva and Skanda-Kārtikeya. Bhavadaṭṭavarman and Arthapatirāja were even known to have dedicated their kingdom to Maheśvara and Mahāśena and apparently, they ruled the state as their representatives. Interestingly, the establishment of the Nala kingdom in south Kośala² synchronised with the burgeoning of Śaivism in this part.

The history of Śiva worship goes to remote antiquity in India³. In the Vedic society 'Rudra' occupies an outstanding place and according to H. C. Das⁴ "the signification of the name Rudra appears to be an evil spirit. The Rudras are called *Gaṇas* or tribes and *Gaṇapatis* are leaders of the tribes and *Niśadas* (forest tribes). Thus the tribes are associated with Rudra. Most probably they were the worshippers of the God which because of his character and influence came to be identified with Aryan Rudra". Many Scholars⁵ believed that the antiquity of Śiva worship in south Kośala goes to the 4th-5th century A.D. when the various schools of Śaivism sprang up at various centres. In the present state of our knowledge it is difficult to say when exactly Śaivism took its root in ancient Kośala or Niśadha country of the Nalas. However, to us, it appears that, Śaivism perhaps, made its advent here with the advent of the Nalas since the last part of 3rd century A.D.

2. J. K. Sahu, *Saivism in Orissa, Sidelights on History and Culture of Orissa*, pp. 326-335, Ancient Niśadha or Kāntāra country is present Daṇḍaka region (Central India) i.e., Bastar-Koraput-Kalahandi area. Vide Chapter 3.
3. H. C. Das, *Cultural Development in Orissa*, pp. 268-314.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 269.
5. J. K. Sahu, *op.cit.*; L. K. Panda, *Śaivism in Orissa*, pp. 78-99; B. Das, *Śaivism in Ancient Orissa, Sidelights on History and Culture of Orissa*, pp. 336-345; H. C. Das, Archaeologically takes back its beginning in Orissa to 5th century A.D.; Das, *op.cit.*, p. 308; K. C. Panigrahi assigns advent of Śaivism in Orissa to 5th century, *History fo Orissa*, p. 313.

We have established that⁶ the Nalas were originally forest tribes (*Niṣādas*) of Vindhyan region after whom the region perhaps came to be known as 'Niṣadha' and were palpably the early worshippers of Rudraśiva. With the founding of Nala kingdom in Kośala perhaps Śaivism made its beginning as a regular religion with profound inner philosophy, popular appeal and princely patronage. As would be discussed, Śaivism made tremendous strides under the umbrella of the Nalas, who even dedicated their kingdom at the feet of Maheśvara and Mahāsenā (*Mahāmaheśvara Mahāsenātisriṣṭa rājya vibhavaḥ*) as is evident from their epigraphs⁷. We do not have any definite evidence whether Śiśuka the founder of the Nala dynasty was a devotee of Śiva and Skanda-Kārtikeya. However, his association with the rulers of Vidiśā who were worshippers of Śiva and his successors fervent patronage and devotion to Śaivism. impel us to presume that he was also a devotee of Śiva.

It is not known definitely if Vyāghrarāja was a Śaivite. However, the ruins of the huge Śaiva monastery complex that have come to light by the recent excavations in the Mārāguḍā Valley⁸ (ancient Kāntāra region) and assigned to 4th/5th century A.D. amply suggest that Śaivism flourished in Nala kingdom under his patronage. Vriṣadhvaḥ of Bhita seal was a devout worshipper of Śiva and Skanda-Kārtikeya as is evident from the epithet "*Maheśvara mahāsenāti sriṣṭa rājya vibhavaḥ*". In this regard we are inclined to suggest that the worship of Skanda-Kārtikeya, perhaps began in Nala kingdom since his days, as early as 4th century A.D. The beautiful image of Kārtikeya (Fig. 16) found inside the temple of Kośaleśvara at

6. See Chapter 3.

7. Rithapur and Keśaribeḍā grants.

8. N. K. Sahu, 'Preliminary Report on excavation of the Triḡul mound in Kalahandi district'. Report of Archaeological Excavations in the Upper Zonk valley in Nawapara Subdivision of Kalahandi district'. *Satavarsiki Smaranika*, 1983, *Khadiā Sahitya Samiti*, pp. I-IX, Also see *Unpublished Excavation Report of Mārāguḍā Valley*.

Baidyanāth, in Balangir district of Orissa has been assigned to 5th/6th century A.D.⁹ In view of our own discovery of ruins of ancient settlement in the form of iron implements, varieties of potteries, semi-precious stone heads from a mound and its section exposed in the side of the Suktel river, beside the temple together with the variety of sculptures of Harihara, Ardhanārīśvara, Gaṇeśa, flying *gandharvas*¹⁰ etc., found inside the temple complex, we are of the opinion that, Baidyanāth perhaps flourished as a religious centre or a *tīrtha* of Śaivism since 3rd century A.D. and became pre-eminently a centre of worship of Skanda-Kārtikeya during 4th century A.D. in contemporaneous with the accession of Vṛṣadhvaja, as is testified by the epigraphic evidence¹¹. Other centres of Śaivism of ancient south Kośala (Niśadha or Kāntāra), which appear to have flourished under the three early Nala rulers, were probably located at Triśul *viḥār*¹² in Kalahandi district, Umarkot and Poḍāgaḍa in Koraput¹³ district and at Rāṇīpur-Jhariāl¹⁴ of Balangir district.

In the present state of our knowledge we cannot say definitely which school of Śaivism flourished under early Nalas. However, in view of the subsequent spectacular growth and development of the *Mattamayura*¹⁵ or the Śaiva *sidhānta* system¹⁶ in central India and south Kośala it appears that this school of Śaivism was popular under early Nalas.

9. Charles Fabri, *The History of the Art of Orissa*, p. 43 ; D. Das, *The Temple of Orissa*, pp. 15-19 ; L. K. Panda, *op.cit.*, pp. 100-120 ; V. Dehejiya, *Early stone Temple of Orissa*, p. 138.

10. D. Das, *op.cit.*

11. *A.S.R.*, 1911-12, p. 51 ; Rajguru, *Inscription of Orissa*, Vol. I, Pt. II, pp. 109-110.

12. N. K. Sahu, *op.cit.*

13. This proposition is supported by the discovery of sculptures of Śaiva pantheon ascribed to 4th/5th century A.D.

14. Rāṇīpur-Jhariāl as a *tīrtha* finds mention in the *Purāṇas* that are compiled in 3rd/4th century A.D. and hence it is evident that Śaivism was in vogue during this period.

15. J. K. Sahu, *op.cit.*, pp. 326-327.

16. L. K. Panda, *op.cit.*

From the representation of couchant bull and crescent moon on the coins of Varāharāja¹⁷, it is evident that he was a devout worshipper of Śiva. L. K. Panda¹⁸ is of the view that Bhavadatṭa the successor of Varāharāja was a gift of 'Bhava' (i.e., Lord Śiva). If the speculation of Dr. Panda is to be given credence then it appears that perhaps Varāharāja was blessed with his son Bhavadatṭavarman by the grace of Lord Śiva. The wide circulation of gold coins marked with Śaivite emblem clearly indicates that Śaivism was popular among the princes and people in the realm of Varāharāja (C. 400-435). Further, we are inclined to think that the worship of 'Śivaliṅgam with Śaktipīṭha', and regular representation of bull emblem in Śaiva religious establishment perhaps began in 5th century A.D. in Nala kingdom since the days of Varāharāja. This contention is very much testified by the *Vṛiṣabha* representation on the coins and the discovery of *Śaktipīṭha* from excavations in Triṣul Mound which on palaeographic ground has been assigned to 5th century A.D. by N. K. Sahu.¹⁹

With the accession of Bhavadatṭavarman (C. 432-465) the great Nala monarch, the heyday of the ascendancy of Śaivism seemed to have ushered in the empire of the Nalas that extended from Berar in Mahārāṣṭra to Belkhaṇḍi in Orissa.

The chronological horizon of the progress of Śaivism in Nala kingdom of south Kośala has been presented in in-coherent, inconsistent and haphazard manner by L. K. Panda²⁰. Setting aside the established chronological positions of Nala kings Panda writes that "in the 5th and 6th century A.D. Śaivism in south Kośala had its beginning under the mighty Nalas who were the enemies of the Vaiṣṇavite Vākatakas". Further, very inconsistently he suggests that "under the influence of the Śaiva teachers who possibly came to south Kośala and

17. *J.N.S.I.*, Vol. I, pp. 29-35.

18. L. K. Panda, *op.cit.*, p. 80.

19. Sahu, *Unpublished excavation report of Mārūgaḍā*.

20. L. K. Panda, *op.cit.*, pp. 81-85.

Kaliṅga from the north after the south Indian campaigns of Samudragupta, Arthapati and Bhavadaṭṭa of the Nala family of Kośala and Anantavarman of the Vasiṣṭha lineage of Kaliṅga embraced Śaivism²¹ and still more curiously he writes that Vṛiṣadhvaṇa was offering his traditional devotion to Maheśvara and Mahāseṇa. Panda's suggestion is un-acceptable since there is no evidence that Śaivāchāryas came in the train of Samudragupta and propagated Śaivism in Kośala. Renown scholars like V. V. Mirashi²², N. K. Sahu²³ have shown beyond any shadow of doubt Vṛiṣadhvaṇa and Varāharāja were predecessors of Bhavadaṭṭa and Arthapatirāja and were Śaivites by faith.

His own suggestion that under Bhavadaṭṭa and Arthapati Śaivism began in Nala kingdom and their predecessors were paying traditional devotion to Maheśvara and Mahāseṇa is self contradictory and as such it may be rejected *prima facie*. On the basis of solid archaeological evidence we have already suggested that Śaivism began in south Kośala as early as the last part of 3rd or early part of 4th century A.D. prior to the invasion of Samudragupta. In fact, the chronology as well as the genealogy of the Nala kings have been presented in such a baseless manner without scant regard to available evidence by Panda²⁴ that most of his suggestions could be diametrically rejected.

From the Rithapur grant²⁵ of Bhavadaṭṭavarman and his

21. *Ibid.*, p. 81. He also writes that by 4th century A.D., Kadambaguḥa-vasi migrated to Kadambagiri, *op.cit.*, p. 86.
22. *J.N.S.I.*, Vol. I, pp. 29-35.
23. Sahu, *Utkal University, History of Orissa*, Vol. I, pp. 506-518.
24. No scholar has assigned Bhavadaṭṭavarman to 6th century A.D. Further by mere imagination Panda categorically states that the Kārtikeya image of Baidyanāth was enshrined by Bhavadaṭṭavarman (although there is absolutely no evidence for such a contention) in his zeal to conform to the theory of Fabri who points out that the iconographic features of the image in question belongs to 6th century A.D., Panda, *op.cit.*, p. 82.
25. *E.I.*, Vol. XIX, pp. 100-104.

coins of Kulia²⁶ and Eḍengā²⁷ hoards it is definitely known that he was a devout worshipper of Śiva. From the epithet 'Maheśvara Mahāsenātisṛiṣṭa rājyavibhavaḥ'²⁸, it is evident that he was not only a devotee of Maheśvara but also Mahāsenā with whose grace he believed to have obtained the kingdom. Bhavadatta-varman was a great king of his days. As known from his grant, he succeeded in occupying Nandivardhan the Vākāṭaka capital. In keeping with his political fortune Śaivism also made tremendous stride in his realm and various Śaiva centres developed under his patronage as testified by archaeological evidence²⁹. Excavations in Triṣul mound³⁰ in the Mārāguḍā valley have brought to light the ruin of a high Śaiva religious complex. N. K. Sahu³¹, the excavator of the site writes "this monastery consisting of temples, residential buildings and recreation grounds with parks and orchards, is a gigantic complex built in five tiers". In his own words "the builders of the monastery may be either Varāharāja or Bhavadatta-varman". We have said this Śaiva establishment seemed to have flourished since the days of Varāharāja. Under the patronage of Bhavadatta-varman the Triṣul monastery which was perhaps named after the nearby Triṣul Dārha of the Zonk river seemed to have reached the climax of its efflorescence. As evident from the residential apartments of the institution (Fig. 11a) Śaivāchāryas were coming from far and wide and residing here and making discussions on various aspects of religion. Śaivism appeared to have assumed new dimension

26. *Prāchya Pratibhā*, Vol. V, No. I, pp. 69-74.

27. *J.N.S.I.*, Vol. I, pp. 29-35.

28. Lines 1 and 2 of Rithapur grant, *E.I.*, *Ibid.*

29. Sahu, *Unpublished excavation report of Mārāguḍā valley*. Also see 'Preliminary report on excavation of the Triṣul Mound in Kalahandi district', Report of Archaeological excavations on the upper Zonk valley in Nawapara Sub-Division of Kalahandi district, *Satavarsiki Smaranika* 1983, *Khadial*, *Sahitya Samiti*, pp. I-IX.

30. *Ibid.*

31. *Ibid.*

with the introduction of Śaktism in its fold. Sahu³² reports "in one of the chambers in the residential building close to the temple is found a stone seal on which the name 'Dhima-tiśvara' is deeply cut in the Brāhmi of 5th century A.D." He appears to be the Āchārya or chancellor³³ of the monastery. The excavations have further revealed two temple complexes. "The main shrine consisting of the sanctum and the porch is on the 2nd ridge. Inside the *Garbhagriha* which is square in size (12' × 12') is enshrined a Saktipīṭha (Figure 10) measuring 2' × 2½' and 3½' in height and around the *pīṭha Pradakṣiṇa paṭha* 2½' wide has been built with great care"³⁴. Another brick temple on the third ridge has been excavated. "Inside the sanctum of the temple the image of the Goddess, four feet in height is found enshrined on a beautiful pedestal (which is also four feet high). The Goddess is two armed and stands in *Ālīdha* attitude (archer's pose) facing right while the lion at her feet faces left"³⁵ (Figure 9). There is an inscription on the pedestal in the script of the 5th century A.D. which reads 'Māheśvari Bhavadā'. N. K. Sahu is of the view that Māheśvari Bhavadā was the *Iṣṭadevī* of king Bhavadātṭavarman. The discovery of a number of *Yoginī* images further lend support that Śaivism proliferated at an astonishing tempo with marked bias to Śaktism under the patronage of Bhavadātṭavarman. The temple building activities seem to have started in south Kośala under his support. On stylistic ground the ruined Śiva temple of Poḍāaḍa, in Koraput district and that of Deheli (Figure 48) (Kalahandi district) and Tentulikhunti (Figure 13) (Balangir district) could be assigned to his age.

L. K. Panda³⁶ believes that Baidyanāth in Balangir district flourished as a *tīrtha* or centre of worship of Skandakārtikeya

32. *Ibid.*

33. *Ibid.*

34. N. K. Sahu, *op.cit.*, p. VII.

35. *Ibid.*

36. Panda, *op.cit.*, p. 82.

under Bhavadaṭṭa's patronage. Panda also thinks that Bhavadaṭṭa who was a devotee of Mahāsenā Kārtikeya named his son Skandavarman after the God. Of course there is no basis for such a contention. However, if the contention be accepted we can say perhaps Bhavadaṭṭa was blessed with his son Skandavarman by the grace of Mahāsenā, the generalissimo.

The numerous evidences clearly testify that Bhavadaṭṭa was a great champion of Śaivism, under whose support the religion progressed fast with marked new orientation in its fold. His high sense of religious consciousness is also reflected in his Rithapur grant³⁷ which records his declaration of the donation of Kadambagiri *Grāma* to Mātrādhyāryya and to his eight sons of *Parāsaragotra* which he made on the eve of his sacred bath at the confluence of Gaṅgā and Yamunā, the place blest by Brahmā (*Prajāpati prasādasiddha kṣetra*) while he was at Prayāg.

Y. R. Gupta³⁸ who edited the Rithapur charter has identified Kadambagiri *Grāma* with present village Kalamba in Yeotmal taluqa of Maharashtra. Of late L. K. Panda³⁹ has introduced a controversy as regard this identification. He is inclined to locate Kadambagiri somewhere in Koraput district of Orissa and suggests that it is identical with Kadambaguha where the 1st Śaiva *āchārya* or the propounder of the Śaiva Siddhanta system was a resident. The contention of Panda⁴⁰ is based on the suggestion of Rajguru⁴¹ that Kadambagiri, found mention in the inscription discovered inside the Jagannath temple complex of Puri is identical with Kadambaguha, the ancient Śaiva centre of the *Mattamayura* sect. The inscription records certain donation made by the king of Kadambagiri,

37. *E.I.*, Vol. XIX, Lines 3-5 of Rithapur grant, p. 102.

38. *Ibid.*

39. Panda, *op.cit.*, pp. 82-83.

40. *Ibid.*

41. Rajguru, *Inscriptions of Orissa*, Vol. IV, p. 351. Pātāleśvar temple inscription is yet to be published.

Jayantarāja of Matsya dynasty, who ruled in Koraput region during medieval period. A careful observation of the logic of the identification indicates that mere phonetic semblance of Kadambagiri is the sole basis of this identification. However, on considering the following pertinent clues of the identification which Panda has failed to notice, we are of the view that Kadambagiri of Rithapur grant cannot be identified in Koraput district and synchronised the same with the famous Śaiva centre of Kadambaguha.

The Rithapur grant has been discovered in Morsi Taluqa of Amarayati district of Maharastra along with a set of copper plates of the Vākāṭaka Queen Prabhāvatī Gupta⁴² and the present village Kalamba which is not far away from Rithapur, the find spot of the charters is located in the same district.

Bhavadatta occupied Nandivardhan the Vākāṭaka capital and kingdom⁴³ for sometime and issued land grants in his newly conquered kingdom from Nandivardhan. There is absolutely no possibility that copper plate grant made at Nandivardhan near Nagpur in Maharastra for the donation of a *grāma* in Koraput district of Orissa will travel back all the way to Rithapur, near Kalamba in Maharastra and would be lodged together with the grant of Prabhāvatī Gupta, the Vākāṭaka queen. Further in the Pātaleśvara temple inscription of Puri⁴⁴ there is mention of the king of Kadambagiri of Matsya family who ruled in medieval period in Koraput region to the further south of river Indrāvati⁴⁵ which was apparently not within Nala territory. Rithapur grant definitely and categorically states that Kadambagiri was a *grāma* and was not known to have been a kingdom or even a *viṣaya*.

The 2nd point of identification of Kadambagiri of the grant in question with Kadambaguha, the seat of the 1st Śaivasid-

42. *E.I.*, Vol. XIX, p. 100.

43. See Chapter 4.

44. Rajguru, *op.cit.*

45. *District Gazetteer*, Koraput, pp. 54-55. Also see Map.

dhānta teacher (*Āchārya*) is equally untenable as there is no evidence for such a contention. In this connection Panda⁴⁶ suggests "that in all probability 'Mātrāddhya Ārya' of *Parāsara gotra*, donee of the plates was a Śaivite teacher of the line of Parāsara of the Lakulisa Pāśupata school. In that case we have to conclude that Kadambaguha or Kadambagiri which was the seat of Śaivasiddhānta school was captured by the Pāśupata school for some time". No scholar including the editor of Rithapur grant Y. R. Gupte has read the same of the donee 'Mātrādhyāryya'⁴⁷ as Mātrāddhya Ārya.

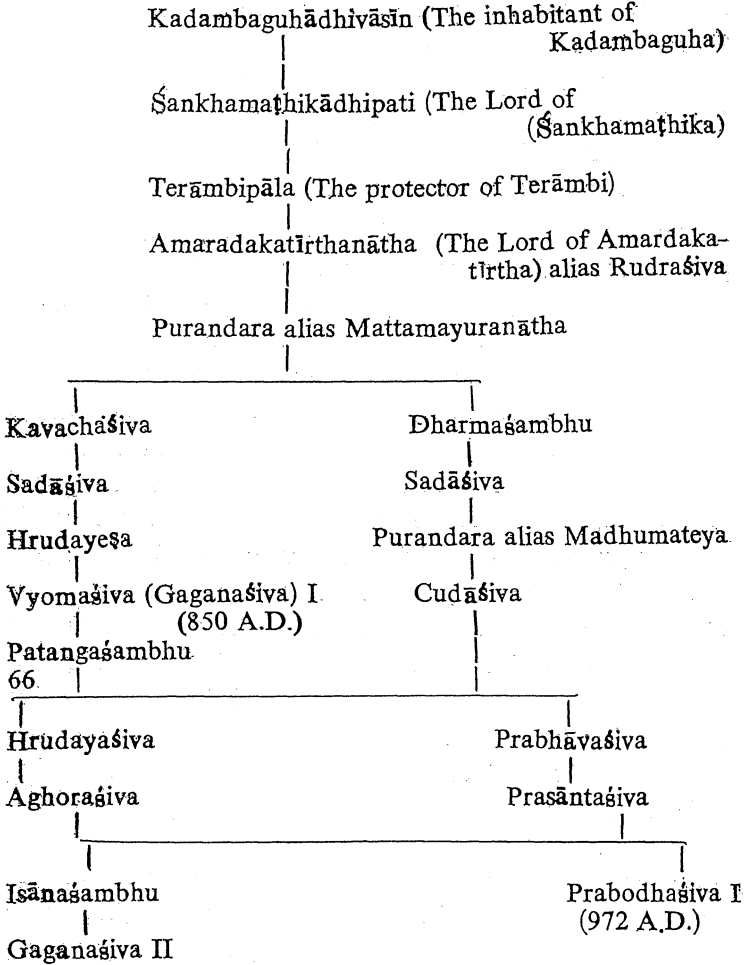
Secondly, it is quite incongruous to think that Bhavadatta, a devout worshipper of Śiva and Śkanda-Kārtikeya would ever donate a pre-eminent centre of the famous *Mattamayura* sect to Pāśupata sect and since Kadambagiri *grāma* was donated to Mātrādhyāryya and to his eight sons by the king, there is no question of physical capture of the flourishing and burgeoning *Śaivasiddhānta* centre of Kadambaguha by the *Pāśupatas* who were not known to have exerted significant influence in Nala kingdom. We have already pointed out that Panda has presented a distorted chronology as well as genealogy of the Nala kings thereby he himself has contradicted his own suggestions. Similarly on examination of the genealogical and chronological horizon of the *Śaivāchāryas* of the *Mattamayura* school, we mark total incongruity of his identification of Kadambaguha with Kadambagiri *grāma*. V. V. Mirashi⁴⁸ has worked out the following genealogy and chronology of the *Śaiva Āchārya* of the *Mattamayura* clan which is supported by K. N. Mahapatra⁴⁹ as well.

46. Panda, *op.cit.*, p. 83.

47. See line 7 of Rithapur grant.

48. *I.H.Q.*, Vol. XXVI, No. 7, pp. 1-16.

49. *O.H.R.J.*, Vol. III, pp. 69-70.



Now the date of Prabodhaśiva is definitely known to us. The 1st Śaivāchārya 'Kadambaguhādhivāśin' is 12th āchārya from Prabodhaśiva. If we assign twentyfive years to each, the date of the 1st Śaiva teacher comes to 670 A.D. and, therefore, logically we can attribute the advent of the 1st Śaiva teacher of the *Mattamayura* clan sometime to the middle of the 7th century A.D. Even if we allow some 100 years for some missing Śaivāchāryas of the Śaiva Siddhānta school, we cannot take the

antiquity of the rise of Kadambaguhavāsī, prior to the days of Bhavadatta-varman⁵⁰ who is definitely known to have reigned in the 5th century A.D. In the light of our discussion it is impossible to accept that Kadambagiri grāma was same as Kadambaguha, the early seat of priestly activities of Śaiva siddhānta or Mattamayura school.

To us the identification of Kadambagiri grāma of the Rithapur grant with the present village Kalamba of Amaravati district of Maharashtra as suggested by Gupte⁵¹ appears to be correct. Further we are inclined to suggest that Kadambaguha grāma and Kadambaguha, the seat of activity of the 1st Śaivāchārya of Mattamayura philosophy are not one and the same. Kadambaguha has been identified with Kadwahā⁵² located in Gwalior region of M.P. However, we are inclined to suggest that Kadambaguha, the centre of activities of the 1st teacher of the Mattamayura sect of Śaivism was very probably located in Kalahandi region (i.e., ancient Kāntāra). Our contention is based on the fact that there have been discovered a numerous ancient centres, with rich cultural relics in the shape of religious structures and sculptures, belonging to Śaivism and Śaktism and ranging in date from 4th to 12th A.D. at places like Asurgarh, Belkhandi, Junagarh, Sankusgarh and Mārāguḍā in Kalahandi district. Secondly, from the Senakapat inscription⁵³ it is evident that some of the Śaivāchāryas are known to have hailed from Tapovana near Dvaitavana. Dvaitavana or Dāruvana appears to be identical with Daṇḍakāraṇya (i.e., ancient Mahāvana, Kāntāra etc.) and Deo Dongri and Tongar Dongar in Mārāguḍā plateau region perhaps represent Dvaitavana and Tapovana of hoary antiquity. Further the ancient names of

50. Panda suggests that Kadambaguha flourished before Bhavadatta-varman as early as 3rd century A.D., which has no basis at all, *op.cit.*, p. 19.

51. *E.I.*, Vol. XIX, p. 102.

52. *O.H.I.J.*, Vol. III, p. 66.

53. *E.I.*, Vol. XXXI, pp. 31-36.

Kalahandi viz. Kālājani, Karoṇḍ, Kharoṇḍe, Kalahambir etc. probably represent the frail phonetic reminiscence of Kadamba-guha and to pin point its location we suggest 'Kalami Dādar'⁵⁴ a very wild and almost inaccessible tract situated between Gidhniṇi and Mārāguḍā village not very far off the recently excavated gigantic Triśul monastery complex. Interestingly, our suggestion is further corroborated by the identification of Terāmbi, the seat of the 3rd Śaivāchārya of Mattamayura clan, Terāmbipāla (the protector of Terāmbi) with the village 'Temrā'⁵⁵ on the bank of the rivulet Tongjor, a few miles away from Rāṇipur-Jhariāl in Balangir district of Orissa. 'Terāmbi' is also identified with Terāhi or Terehi near Rānod⁵⁶ in Gwalior region of M.P. Of late, J. K. Sahu⁵⁷ has put forth a very intelligent suggestion in this regard and points out that Terāmbi and Terāmba were two different places. In the Rānod inscription there is mention of "Uttara Terāmbagriha"⁵⁸ which very probably refers to Terāhi, which is in the north of 'Rāṇipadra' that finds mention many times in the Rānod inscription and is identified with Rāṇipur-Jhariāl by K. N. Mahapatra⁵⁹. J. K. Sahu⁶⁰ however, suggests this in an opposite way and says Terāmba perhaps stands for Temrā. To us, the suggestion of N. K. Sahu appears quite plausible and Temrā on Tongor, perhaps represents ancient Terāmbi the seat of the 3rd Śaiva teacher Terāmbipāla. Temrā is situated hardly at a distance of some 40 km. to the south-east of Kalami Dādar and Mārāguḍā region where the ruins of the unique and massive Śaiva establishment has come to light. Further more, even today we find relics of Śaivism in Temrā village and to add to this J. P. Sing

54. *Koraput district gazetteer*, p. 7.

55. N. K. Sahu, *Odiya Jātira Itihās*, p. 342.

56. *O.H.R.J.*, *Ibid*.

57. J. K. Sahu, *op.cit.*, p. 332.

58. *O.H.R.J.*, *Ibid*.

59. *Ibid*.

60. J. K. Sahu, *op.cit*.

Deo⁶¹ recently in a paper reports the discovery of the ruins of a 64 Yoginī temple in Kalahandi district.

Since there is limitation in this work, we do not like to go into further details in the attempt of our identification of Kadambaguha in Kalahandi district. Suffice to say here that our attempt is an humble suggestion subject to further detailed research.

Arthapatirāja (C. 465-480), the elder son and successor of Bhavadattavarman was also a champion of Śaivism who paid earnest devotion at the feet of Maheśvara and Mahāsenā as is known from his declaration in the 1st line of his Keśaribedā grant *Maheśvaramahāsenātisriṣṭarājya vibhavaḥ*⁶². He retreated from Nandivardhan and ruled from Puškari (i.e. Poḍagaḍa). G. Ramdas⁶³ reports about the find of a ruined Bhairava temple near the Poḍagaḍa hill and another dilapidated Śiva temple (Fig. 7) to its south-west. We also visited the site and noticed many broken sculptures of Gaṇeśa, Bhairava, Kārtikeya and Yoginīs (Fig. 5) together with other relics in the form of pottery, terracottas (Fig. 4) and semi-previous stone beads. These extant relics suggest that Poḍagaḍa flourished as a centre of Śiva worship in the days of Arthapati and his predecessor as well. Vestiges of an old temple built of bricks, similar to those at Poḍagaḍa with a Bhairava image and Śiva *lingam* is also reported from the village Parva near Raighar in Umarkot tahasil⁶⁴, which indicates the prevalence of Bhairava and *Liṅga* worship in Nala kingdom. Ramdas⁶⁵ further reports the find of an old stone image of 'Umā-Maheśvara' at Bāmini in Umarkot area belonging to Nala age which testifies to the popularity of Umā-Maheśvara cult as well. We visited Andi-Beheḍā, Andhri, Bānuaguḍā, Tārāgāon located near Kesaribedā village

61. J. P. Sing Deo, *The Focus*, December, 1983.

62. *E.I.*, Vol. XXVIII, p. 16.

63. *J.B.R.S.*, Vol. XXXIII, Pt. I-II, p. 10.

64. *Ibid.*, p. 11.

65. *Ibid.*, p. 14.

and found Śaiva relics. Keśaribedā grant of Arthapati⁶⁶ records the donation of Keśelaka grāma to four Brāhmaṇas of *Kautsa-sagotra*. Keśelaka Grāma has been convincingly identified with modern Keśaribedā, the find-spot of the grant. At present we notice there three mounds⁶⁷ containing brickbats, pottery and stone slabs along with an old-pond beside the find spot of the grant (Fig. 5). It appears that Śaivism developed in this part under the patronage of Arthapati.

In the present Nilakantheśvar temple complex of Umarkot proper located amidst the vestiges of an old fort with ditches⁶⁸ we notice the figure of Gaṇeśa, Umā-Maheśvara, Pārvatī, Kārtikeya, Śiva, Bhairavī and *Mātrikās*. We are inclined to suggest that some of the sculptures belong to the period under discussion. In addition to this in most villages of Koraput, Kalahandi and Balangir region⁶⁹ we find representation of various deities of Śaiva pantheon. This part was the cradle of Nala kingdom. The wide popularity of Śaivism here perhaps owes its origin to this epoch of the early Nalas and some of the Śaiva centres can be assigned to them as well. With the sudden demise of Arthapati perhaps in his encounter with the Vākāṭakas⁷⁰, the early phase of the progress of Śaivism seems to have come to an end. Under his successor Skandavarman, a devout worshipper of Viṣṇu, Vaiṣṇavism made its appearance in the Nala kingdom.

The 2nd phase of Śaivism in Nala territory appears to have flourished in Kalahandi, Balangir and Rājim region under the patronage of Śristambha (C. 550-585). We have discussed that these Nala rulers have shifted their political activities to this part.

66. *E.I.*, Vol. XXVIII, pp. 11-15; *J.B.B.S.*, Vol. XXXIV, Pt. I-II, pp. 33-43.

67. Ramdas reports of five mounds, *Ibid*.

68. *J.B.R.S.*, Vol. XXXIII, Pt. I-II. p. 14.

69. We have not surveyed the Bastar region which formed inseparable part of early Nala kingdom.

70. See Chapter 4.

From the crescent and couchant-bull representation on their coins⁷¹ it is clearly evident that they were worshippers of Śiva. Since no epigraphs of these rulers have come to our notice, the Śaiva relics of this region which was included in their kingdom, were the only mute testimony of the growth of Śaivism. We have suggested that the capital of the Nalas by this time has been shifted to Mārāguḍā valley⁷² where the massive Triśul monastery have been un-earthed. The discovery of a few Yoginī figures⁷³ from the upper level of the site indicates that by the 6th century A.D. Śakti or the female principle had great impact on Śaivism and the Śaiva establishment of the place appears to have continued enjoying patronage of the Nala rulers. During this time, Belkhandi⁷⁴, where images of Gaṇeśa, Kārtikeya, Umā-Maheśvara, Pārvatī, Durgā and Maheśvara etc. have been recovered through excavation and assigned between 6th to 8th century A.D. was also a famous Śaiva centre. Later on tantricism crept into the fold of Śaivism and Śaktism. The find of various figures of Śaiva pantheon at Rāñīpur-Jhariāi, Surdā, Sāuntpur, Deogāon, Tantulikhunti etc. in Balangir district assignable to this epoch⁷⁵ very well testifies that Śaivism received wide popularity in the region. From the study of the variety of cult figures of this age it is also evident that Śaivism in amalgamation with Śaktism gave rise to tantricism.

The successors of Nandanarāja were primarily Vaiṣṇavites. However, Śaivism seems to have progressed un-abated. They were not known to have been inimical to Śaivism and it appears that the religion received their royal support as well.

71. *Prāchya Pratibha*, Vol. V, No. I, pp. 69-70 ; *J.N.S.I.*, Vol. XL, Pt. I-II, pp. 108-110.

72. See Chapters 4 and 5.

73. Sahu, *op.cit.*

74. *K.H.R.S.*, Vol. I, No. 3, pp. 265-270. Also see, *History of Orissa*, p. 82.

75. See Chapter on Art and Architecture,

Of the later Nalas Bhīmasenadeva (C. 900-935 A.D.) was known to have seen a devotee of 'Yamaliṅgeśvara'⁷⁶. He ruled in Aska region of Ganjam district of Orissa. After this king we do not find any direct evidence of Śiva worship by other Nala rulers in their records.

The survey divulges that the beginning and burgeoning of Śaivism in south Kośala was intimately interlinked with the origin and rise of the Nalas. Maheśvara and Mahāsena, the family deities of Nalas appear to have occupied the highest rung in the ladder of Śaiva pantheon. Worship of *Śaktipīṭha* and *Śiva-Liṅga* together with *Vṛṣabha* in Śaiva shrines seem to have been introduced in their glorious epoch. The amalgamation of Śaktism with Śaivism give rise to Tantricism, which subsequently had its revolutionary reflection in art and techtonic farms and enchanting echo in social and cultural order.

In fact, the age of the Nalas represents the formative phase of Śaivism, its ideals, ideation and thought. In ancient India many monastic establishments have been found all over India either belonging to Buddhism or to Jainism but as yet a monastic establishment of Śaivas in ancient time has not been traced out any where in the country. The Triśul Vihā of which the Nalas were the chief patrons seems to have been the precursor of Śaiva monastery in India⁷⁷.

VAIṢṆAVISM

Nala kingdom witnessed the splendid efflorescence of Vaiṣṇavism. From the epigraphic statement "*Pādamulaṁ Krutaṁ Viṣṇou Rājña Śriskandavarmaṇa*"⁷⁸, it is definitely evident that Nala king Skandavarman (C. 480-515 A.D.) was an ardent devotee of Viṣṇu and an active patron of Vaiṣṇavism. What was the state of Vaiṣṇavite movement in South Kośala

76. *O.H.R.J.*, Vol. VI, Pt. I, pp. 97-102 ; *E.I.*, Vol. XXXIV, pp. 233-38.

77. N. K. Sahu, *Satavarsiki Smaranika*, Khadial Sahitya Smiti, p. V,

78. *E.I.*, Vol. XXI, p. 56, Line 5.

prior to his days is almost shrouded in obscurity. S. C. Behera⁷⁹ believes that after Samudragupta's invasion Vaiṣṇavism received its momentum under royal patronage and the Māpharas in Kaliṅga and the Nalas in Western Orissa (i.e. South Koṣala area) were known to have marshalled the cause of the faith in 4th/5th century A.D. H. C. Das⁸⁰ also supports this contention and speculating about its antiquity he is inclined to suggest that "this religion might have spread in this land from the 1st phase of its reflection"⁸¹. In fact, Vaiṣṇavism appears to have a hoary beginning in this part as is indirectly indicated by the vast mass of legendary accounts. The Indradyumna⁸² episode suggests its origin in tribal society in an unknown Blue hill, perhaps, located some where in the eternal Vindhyan range, the cradle of the Nalas, of South Koṣala. "Nārāyaṇa was the primordial deity in the beginning and the predominance of Viṣṇu in Vaiṣṇavism appears to be a later development"⁸³ and the ideation of Jagannāth seems to be its latest manifestation. H. Kulke⁸⁴ believes that perhaps Jagannāth was the most famous Hinduized tribal deity and Orissa seemed to have been deeply influenced by the tribal culture. Taking into consideration iconography of Jagannāth A. Eschman⁸⁵ thinks "it is their being of wood which allows or necessitates the renewal of the Jagannāth images as well as the dominating role which the daitas i.e., the priests of tribal origin play in this ritual strongly suggests its being of tribal origin". We are inclined to suggest

79. S. C. Behera, 'Rise and growth of Vaiṣṇavism in Orissa', *Sidelights on History and culture of Orissa*, pp. 371-374.

80. H. C. Das, *op.cit.*, p. 345.

81. *Ibid.*, p. 344.

82. *Ibid.*, pp. 365-366. This pertains to Viṣṇu in the form of Jagannāth.

83. *Ibid.*, p. 318.

84. H. Kulke, Early state formation and royal legitimation in late ancient Orissa, *Sidelights on History and culture of Orissa*, pp. 105 and 112.

85. A. Eschman, Prototype of the Navakalevara ritual and their relation to Jagannāth cult, *Ibid.*, p. 387.

that Vaiṣṇavism had a very early beginning in South Kośala many centuries before Skandavarman in the early period of the emergence of the tribal Nalas as a ruling power and the exact evidence seem to have been lost in course of time.

From the epigraphic evidence of Poṭṭāgḍa stone inscription and Rājim temple inscription it is evident that Vaiṣṇavism which revolves round the supreme god Viṣṇu had its diverse manifestations at different places of Nala kingdom.

The charter of Skandavarman begins with an invocation to Lord Hari

*“Hariṇā jitaṁ jayati jasyatitvesa guṇastutirṇhisā
Nanu Bhagavāneva jayaṁ jetavyaṁ chadhijetācha”*⁸⁸.

(“Hari was victorious, is victorious, and will be victorious is not that (i.e. appropriate). For verily the Divine (Hari) is himself the conquest, the object to be conquered and the conqueror”). This grant records the foundation of a ‘foot print’ (*Pādamula*) of Viṣṇu and donation of certain holding alongwith abundant *bhuridakṣiṇā* made to the donee Chakradroṇa for worship in the temple, by the noble king and foremost scion (*Śrīnalānvayamuḥṣasa*) and son of Bhavadatṭavarman, with a hope of obtaining religious merit for his father, other ancestors and mother and desiring welfare for himself. He also directed that the proceeds of the holding should be entirely utilised for feeding in a *śatra* of Brāhmaṇas, specially of ascetics, of the poor and of the destitutes. In line eleven he further declares that “he who will conform to the good path followed by king will for long find refuge in God Vāsudeva”⁸⁹ (*Savāsudevāśrayaṁapnuyachhiyram*). From these references it is abundantly evident that Skandavarman was a devout worshipper of Viṣṇu and a devoted champion of Vaiṣṇavism.

86. *E.I.*, Vol. XXI, pp. 153-157.

87. *Ibid.*, Vol. XXVI, 46-59.

88. *E.I.*, Vol. XXI, p. 55, Lines 1 and 2.

89. *Ibid.*, pp. 153-57.

The meaning of 'Pādamula' of Viṣṇu which the king established at Puṣkari and set-up the inscription just in front of it is not quite clear. C. R. Krishnamachar⁹⁰, who edited the grant translates it as a sanctuary. G. Ramdas⁹¹ thinks it to be a place of pilgrimage wherein the foot print of Viṣṇu was installed. He also reports of the discovery of a piece of "stone about two feet in diameter on which is a slightly deepened impression of a man's right foot. The foot print itself is about 12" long and suggests that it must have been made by a very stalwart man". The worn out foot impression and the eroded stone impressed him that it belonged to the same age as the epigraph on the rocky hill. "Perhaps it was the footprint (Pādamula) of Viṣṇu said in the inscription to have been set up by prince Skandavarma".⁹² The relic was found amidst thick forest three miles away in north-easterly direction from Poḍāgaḍa. However, we are inclined to suggest that perhaps the establishment of *pādamula* of Viṣṇu refers to the establishment of a Viṣṇu *Vihār* or monastery by the king where the emblem of footprint of Viṣṇu was the chief object of veneration. This contention is supported by the internal evidence as well as traditional instances of footprint worship in monasteries by the Buddhists and Śaivas. The donation of a large holding for the maintenance of ascetics and poors in a *satra* indicates that the *pādamula* was nothing but a Vaiṣṇava *vihāra*. In Buddhist Vihāras, worship of footprint was also in vogue. At Rāṇīpur-Jhariāl even to-day we notice a few pairs of foot-prints worshiped with great veneration. It was known to have been a centre of Śaivism and monastic activities⁹³. N. K. Sahu⁹⁴ is inclined to think that "the footprint symbolises the dwarf incarnation of Viṣṇu and it appears that the idea of divine incarnation was popular in the Nala

90. *Ibid.*, pp. 156-57.

91. *J.B.R.S.*, Vol. XXXIII, Pt. I-II, pp. 7-13.

92. *Ibid.*, p. 11.

93. Traces of the brick structures with the house plan of monastic order traced out recently, testify the contention.

94. N. K. Sahu, *Utkal University History of Orissa*, Vol. I, p. 518.

kingdom". Whatever might be the significance it seems that the traditions of worship of footprint was borrowed from Buddhism. We visited the Poḍāgaḍa hill fort (Fig. 3) and made detailed surface exploration of the site where the inscribed stone slab stands in isolated set-up amidst jungle ambience, in the one time thriving imperial city of the Nalas, now deserted and forlorn and found traces of a structure in the shape of brickbats, stone slabs, parts of pillars and architectural projections together with the outline of a temple where the footprint seemed to have been lodged. We discovered a stone image of Hanumāna in the right corner of the majestic hill fort which indicates that the incarnation of Rāma and his worship together with Hanumāna was in vogue in Nala kingdom.

G. Ramdas⁹⁵ conducted a trial digging at Keśaribedā near the find spot of the Keśaribedā grant of Arthapatirāja in 1944 and traced out a rectangular structure 8' × 4' and built up walls 2 feet thick with bricks of (18" × 8" ÷ 2") size. His report further says, "the wall now standing are about 2'6" vertical on a floor paved with the same kind of bricks. The entrance into this room is in the eastern wall. Opposite to this entrance is a beautiful carved image of Viṣṇu standing two feet high on the pedestal cut on the middle of an obelisk 6' high". The image is 6' armed. "In the upper right hand is the *chakra* while on the upper left hand the *Śaṅkha*. The lower right hand rests on the sword that hung from a belt round the waist. The lower left hand rests with the palm upwards on the top of the vertically standing *gadā*". He assigns an ancient date for this Viṣṇu figure⁹⁶. From this it is evident that Vaiṣṇavism flourished side by side together with other religions. Arthapatirāja, elder brother of Skandavarman, was a stunch Śaivite and was known to have donated this village (*agrahara*) to four donees of Kautsasagotra. We notice a Viṣṇu image of similar type at Nilakanṭheśvar temple complex of Umarkot which indicates that

95. J.B.R.S., *Ibid.*, pp. 12-13.

96. *Ibid.*

Vaiṣṇavism also thrived at many places and was popular among people.

The occurrence of Vāsudeva⁹⁷ (Kṛiṣṇa) in the epigraph testifies to the prevalence of Vāsudeva cult in the Nala domain and its amalgamation with Viṣṇu in the Vaiṣṇava philosophy. Vāsudeva Kṛiṣṇa cult which is resplendent in Indian sacred literature was a very popular creed through the ages. In the *Mahābhārata* he is described principally as the invincible fighter god, a guide and a philosopher. Skandavarman an invincible warrior of his age was a worshipper of Vāsudeva who appears to have been inspired by his personality. The creed also seemed to have popular appeal in Nala kingdom.

Under Skandavarman the Nala kingdom extended almost over the entire traditional South Kośala region wherein of late relics of Vaiṣṇava pantheon have been traced out at many places, some of which, on stylistic ground, could be assigned to this epoch. In course of our exploration we have discovered a number of Viṣṇu figures (Figs. 32, 33, 34). Saintalā and Sāuntpur in Bolangir district together with ancient brick, pottery, structural remains and other vestiges ascribable to Nala Age⁹⁸.

Vaiṣṇavī, the counterpart of Viṣṇu⁹⁹ also finds representation in the sculptural art of this region at places like Belkhandi in Kalahandi district. Thus Vaiṣṇavism with a rich pantheon and synthesis of other allied cults had a spectacular growth and development enjoying popular support and princely protection. If the institution of *pādamula* of Viṣṇu be accepted to represent a Vaiṣṇava *vihār* (*Matha*) then it can be said that some sort of Vaiṣṇavite monastic order had also made its appearance under Skandavarman. We are also inclined to suggest that the invocatory phraseology "Hari is himself the conquered and the conqueror" that finds place in the beginning of the inscription marked with some sort of heroic and military accent, perhaps

97. *E.I.*, XXI, p. 156, Line 11.

98. See Chapter on Art and Architecture.

99. H. C. Das, *op.cit.*, p. 346.

reflects the dichotomic chivalrous and religious personality of Skandavarman the great and invincible warrior of his age who appeared to have been inspired by the versatile charisma of Viṣṇu and Vāsudeva, his personal and state deity. His death about C. 515 A.D. marked the end of a phase of Vaiṣṇavism in south Kośala.

With the ascendancy of Rājim group of Nalas Prithvirāja (C. 585-625), Viruparāja (C. 625-660) and Vilāsatuṅga (C. 660-700) the 2nd phase of Vaiṣṇavism sprouted in Nala kingdom of South Kośala with chief concentration in and around Rājim area comprising parts of the present day adjoining region of Sambalpur-Bolangir, Kalahandi, Raipur and Durg districts. The Rājivlochan temple inscription¹⁰⁰ of Vilāsatuṅga starts with a prayer offered to Viṣṇu. H. L. Sukla¹⁰¹ opines that the four armed Viṣṇu image holding *Śaṅkha*, *Chakra*, *gadā*, *padma* etc. found inside the Rājivlochan temple belongs to this epoch. He further states that according to Viṣṇu *Purāṇa* the eyes of Viṣṇu resemble a fully blossomed lotus (Rajiv) and the name of the Viṣṇu image of Rājim seems to have derived its name Rājivlochan from that. In that previous phase of Vaiṣṇavism we noticed limited and symbolic representation of Viṣṇu's incarnation. But in sharp contrast in this phase Viṣṇu's incarnations became diverse and numerous. In the inscription we find names of Varāha, Nrusiṅgha, Vāmana Māndhātā and Rāma etc. which interestingly had their iconic representation in the temple complex itself, testifying to the popularity of Avatāra worship of Viṣṇu Himself in his manifold mysterious aspects. The Nārāyaṇa image of Badrinārāyaṇa temple of this place furnishes evidence of synthesis of Nārāyaṇa the primordial deity and Viṣṇu the supreme God. The *Gajalakṣmī* motif represented in this rich Vaiṣṇava centre, suggests that by this time, the worship of Lakṣmī with Viṣṇu became popular and the motif became almost an inseparable

100. *E.I.*, Vol. XXVI, pp. 49-56.

101. H. L. Sukla, *Prāchīna Bastar*, pp. 161.

part of temple architecture. The beautiful Viṣṇu images (Fig. 33) of Saintalā together with the ruins and relics of a Vaiṣṇava temple, with the extant doorjamb and icons of Viṣṇu's incarnation¹⁰², indicate that Saintalā was a flourishing centre of Vaiṣṇavism. We also find relics of Vaiṣṇava pantheon at Sālebhaṭā, and Patnagarh in Bolangir district of Orissa, which on stylistic ground could be assigned to this age. The Biranchi-nārāyaṇa image of Sālebhaṭā amply testifies that the Nārāyaṇa cult was also popular. The exquisite Trivikrama (Fig. 32) figure of Sāuntpur suggests the spread of the worship of Viṣṇu's various incarnations into the remote areas.

The figures of *Vārāhī* and *Vaiṣṇavī* etc. found in this area amply reflect that Vaiṣṇavism developed significantly with a rich and diverse pantheon in the Nala kingdom. Gradually a process of synthesis of various cults and cult icon developed almost at all important religious centres as is evident from the congregation of Śiva, Viṣṇu, Lakṣmī, Ardhanārīśvara, *Mātrikās* and Harihara figures in one centre, at places like Saintalā, Sāuntpur, Badhyanāth, Harisankar, Rājim and Belkhandi etc. and the process finally seems to have been culminated in the worship of all pervasive Jagannāth in the later period.

ŚAKTISM

The contrasting phenomenon of rare epigraphic and numismatic evidence, and the resplendent presence of panoramic phalanx of Śakta divinities, diverse and numerous, in the Nala kingdom is a perplexing problem like the complicated philosophy of the cult itself. It is not known definitely if Śaktism received princely patronage, nevertheless, the abundant and exuberent sculptural evidences brought to light by a series of spectacular archaeological discoveries precisely suggest that the creed had unprecedented popular appeal and accretion in the religious firmament in the age of the Nalas.

102. *K.H.R.J.*, Vol. II, Nos. 2-3, pp. 2-3.

The advent of Śaktism in the Nala territory of south Kōśala is wrapped in obscurity. According to H. C. Das¹⁰³ "this powerful religion made its appearance in Orissa two or three centuries before Christ" and a similar date of its origin in Nala kingdom is not altogether precluded. Many renowned scholars¹⁰⁴ strongly suggest the tribal origin of the faith in this part which appears very convincing. In the Kalahandi copper plate grant of Mahārāja Tustikāra¹⁰⁵ "Stambhesvari" (Lady of the post or "Pillar goddess") finds mention, which according to A. Eschman¹⁰⁶ is a Hinduised tribal goddess. Even to-day, we find in this area wide prevalence of wooden post or pillar worship as the embodiment of goddess among tribals together with her stone image nearby (Fig. 36). The Nalas originally who were a tribal people of this part, perhaps worshipped Śakti (energy or power) the mysterious manifestation of nature in such a manner since the earliest days of their emancipation.

The earliest archaeological evidence of Śaktism is available to us from the recent important excavations on the Triśul mound in the Mārāguḍā valley of Kalahandi, which on palaeographic ground has been assigned to 4th/5th century A.D.¹⁰⁷ A beautiful brick temple unearthed from underground, is found perched on the first two ridges. The main shrine consisting

103. H. C. Das, *op.cit.*, pp. 210-227. Also see his 'Śakit cult in Orissa', *Sidelights on History and Culture of Orissa*, pp. 351-361.

104. *Ibid.*, p. 351; H. Kulke, *op.cit.*, p. 111; A. Eschman, *op.cit.*, p. 387.

105. *K.H.R.J.*, Vol. II, No. 2-3, pp. 107-110; Tustikāra's progeny and dynasty is not known. H. L. Sukla thinks that he was a feudatory chief of Nalas, *op.cit.*, pp. 97-101; N. K. Sahu coins his house as 'parvatadvaraka' after the name of his capital, *History of Orissa*, pp. 80-83, we have suggested that he ruled under the umbrella of the Nalas and his territory was within the sphere of cultural and political zone of the Nalas.

106. A. Eschman, *op.cit.*, p. 388.

107. N. K. Sahu, *Unpublished excavation report of Mārāguḍā valley*, pp. 1-5.

of the sanctum and the porch is on the 2nd ridge, while the approach path and some other chambers of the temple are in the first ridge. Inside the *Garbhargriha* which is square in size (12 ft. × 12 ft.) is enshrined a “Śaktipīṭha” (Fig. 10) (without *Linga*) measuring 2 ft. × 12½ ft. and 3½ ft. in height and around the *Pīṭha* a ‘*pradakṣiṇpatha*’ 2½’ wide has been built with great care. The porch is rectangular in size (5 ft. × 7½ ft.) and small images of (all females) deities are found inside it”¹⁰⁸. In the third ridge another ruins of a brick temple has been revealed “Inside the sanctum of the temple the image of the goddess (Fig. 9) four feet in height is found enshrined on a beautiful pedestal which is also four feet in height. The goddess is two armed and stands in *Ālīdha* attitude (archer’s pose) facing right while the lion at her feet faces left”. There is an inscription on the pedestal in the script of the 5th century A.D. which reads “*Māheśvarī Bhavadā*”¹⁰⁹. K. C. Panigrahi and H. C. Das¹¹⁰ are also inclined to suggest the date of two armed *Durgā* images to the same period. *Māheśvarī Bhavadā* is believed to be the *iṣṭadevī* of Nala king *Bhavadaṭṭavarman* (C. 435-465 A.D.) by Sahu, which appears quite plausible. Two armed *Durgā* images are also found in Umarnot region which clearly alight us that Śakti cult in the form of *Durgā* worship was in vogue in Nala kingdom.

Worship of ‘*Liṅga* on *Śaktipīṭha*’ was also popular. By this time a synthesis of Śaivism and Śaktism had already taken place. The un-identified stone figurines of female deities recovered from the excavation suggest that a rich and varied Śakta divinities were worshipped together with *Durgā*. In the present state of our knowledge we cannot say for certain if these divinities are *Yoginīs* or not. However, we are inclined to think that the figures of the godlings were earlier representation and reflection of the later efflorent *Yoginī* cult. The establishment

108. *Ibid.*, p. 2.

109. *Ibid.*, p. 3.

110. R. C. Das, *op.cit.*, p. 352.

of *Śaktipitha* inside the sanctum gives clear evidence that by this time *Puruṣa* and *prakṛiti*, *Śiva* and *Śakti* were conceived as one and worshipped together. The abundant and profuse sculptural representation in most of the ancient *Śaiva* shrines of *Durgā* and her multitude manifestations further corroborates such a speculation.

The upper part of iron sacrificial post (*yupastambha*) found beside the *Durgā* temple¹¹¹ also suggests that the paraphernalia of ritual sacrifice had already entered into the fold of the *Śaktism* by this time. Thus we get a vivid picture of a well-developed order of *Śakta* cult in the *Mārāguḍā* valley¹¹² in the epoch of the early Nalas.

The next stage of efflorescence of *Śaktism* appears to have been represented by the vestiges of *Asurgarh*, brought to light by excavations¹¹³. *Asurgarh* is located three miles to the west of *Narā* station in *Kalahandi* district of *Orissa*. The archaeological operation reveals that it was a formidable square fort on the river *Sandul* with four wide gates in four cardinal directions and on each gate was installed a guardian deity namely *Gaṅgā* at the east, *Kalāpāṭ* at the west, *Vaiṣṇavī* at the north and *Dokri* at the south, evidently indicating the significant influence of *Sakta* divinities in the fort township. On the basis of strati-

111. Sahu, 'Report of Archaeological Excavations in the upper Jonk valley in Nawapara Sub-Division of *Kalahandi* district. *Satavarsiki Smaranika*, 1983, *Khadial Sahitya Smaiti*, p. VIII.

112. J. P. Sing Deo, speaking of the discovery of a stone '*Yoni*' in *Mārāguḍā* valley writes "*Yoni*, the *Ādi-Śakti* is the primal root of the source of objectivation and believed to possess life of its own. It is treated as a sacred area worthy of reverence, a symbol of Cosmic force. It is the ultimate ground, in which the seed of all Creation is planted and nourished. All life generates in the womb, and in due course all things emerge from therein. These discoveries, prove *Mārāguḍā* valley, to have been a notable site of SEX WORSHIP. See the Focus, 1983, we however, suggest the *Yoni* to have been represented *Śakti* worship.

113. N. K. Sahu 'Archaeological findings in *Asurgarh*', *New dimension of Tourism in Orissa*, 1976, pp. 9-12.

graphy of the antiquities the cultural sequence of the site has been convincingly ranged between 3rd century B.C. to 6th century A.D. by the excavator¹¹⁴. The upper layer assigned from 4th to 6th century A.D. has yielded rich relics of this cult. Śakta cultural assemblage of this stratum can, therefore, without any chance of error be assigned to the Nalas¹¹⁵. In fact, this area comprising present day Bastar, Koraput and Kalahandi region was south Kośala and Mahākāntāra, the cradle of the Nalas¹¹⁶.

A trial digging in the residential area has brought to light a circular brick structure 40 feet in diameter together with terracotta figurines of goddess. The structure has been identified as a shrine of mother goddess, probably belonging to Śtambhesvari found mention in the Terāsingā (Kalahandi) charter of Tustikāra of an hitherto unknown lineage.

These evidences very much speak that Śaktism was in flourishing condition and its cult icons were installed even as guardians of the quarters. We are further inclined to suggest that at this centre, there is a clear reflection of the earliest beginning of the tradition of the circular Yoginī temple and perhaps its creed as well. The find of objects of magic cure¹¹⁷ further indicates that Tāntricism, made its appearance in Buddhism, Śaivism and Śaktism during this period.

The third stage of the transcendence of the system can be traced in the trial trenching of Belkhandi conducted by K. N. Mahapatra¹¹⁸. Belkhandi, ancient 'Rājpadar' situated at the

114. *Ibid.*

115. Asurgarh is sometimes identified as the capital of Tustikāra, perhaps a subordinate ruler of Nalas. This fact is fully corroborated when N. K. Sahu the excavator assigns this site to Vyāghrarāja, prior to Tustikāra, *Ibid.* So there is absolutely no doubt that this Śakta centre flourished under Nalas. Also see, Sukla, 'Prāchīna Bastar', p. 97.

116. N. K. Sahu, *Ibid.* ; Sukla, *Ibid.*

117. Sahu, *Ibid.*

118. *N.H.R.J.*, Vol. II, Nos. 2 and 3, pp. 167-172.

confluence of the rivers Tel and Utei in Kalahandi district of Orissa, was a great centre of Śakti cult, as evident from the excavations. The site to the west of the present Chaṇḍī temple yielded beautiful Saptamātrukā statues of Kaumārī, Māheśvarī, Brahmāṇī, Vaiṣṇavī, Vārāhī, Indrāṇī and Chāmuṇḍā along with their respective vehicles. Other figures recovered from the place are Umā-Maheśvara (Figs. 38, 39, 40) Lakṣmī, Nārāyaṇa, Gaṇeśa, Kārtikeya, Brahmā, Garuḍa, Vruṣabha, Gajasimha, Maheśvara, Pārvatī (Fig. 31), Durgā, Nāgas, Yogis, Dvārapālas and some unidentified statues of Brahmanical pantheon. These discoveries together with the structural remains suggest that Belkhandi was a thriving religious centre of Brahmanism.

As regards the date of the relics there is controversy. K. N. Mahapatra¹¹⁹ and following him N. C. Das¹²⁰ ascribe these monuments to Somavamśī period (i.e. 8th, 9th century A.D.). J. D. Beglar¹²¹ and N. K. Sahu¹²² are inclined to suggest the date between 6th to 8th and 6th to 11th century A.D. respectively. In view of the close resemblance of the Mātrukā statues and a few others with the sculptures of Rājīm area which Beglar suggests, we are inclined to assign their date in 6th/7th century A.D. in the days of the Rājīm group of Nala rulers.

Besides these chief excavated centres we find sculptural representation of Śakta deities at many places in this part, some of which on stylistic ground could be assigned to the period under discussion. The final stage of the evolution of this religion finds expression in the yoginī cult, which witnessed its fuller efflorescence in and around Rāṇipur-Jhariāl in ancient south Kośala. On the basis of the archaeological evidence we have already hinted about the existence of the tradition of circular temple of Śakta deity in Nala kingdom as early as 5th century A.D. and it appears that in Rāṇipur-Jhariāl also the movement

119. *Ibid.*

120. Das, *op.cit.*, pp. 355-56.

121. K.H.R.J., *Ibid.*

122. *History of Orissa*, pp. 82-83.

made its advent sometime in 6th/7th century A.D. Recently J. P. Singh Deo¹²³ has traced out the relics of another Yoginī temple along with its central deity (Fig. 26) at Sankusgarh in Kalahandi district which suggests that the cult lately became very popular in this region. Apart from the cult icons, the manifestation of Śākta-tantric pantheon gradually spread and adorned the niches and facades of temples in the slender form of *alasa-kanyās*, *apsarās* and flying fairies resplendant with all conceivable sensuous and seductive postures and coquettis gorgeous gestures rendering the whole into an amatory world of immanent Śakti.

OTHER DIVINITIES

Besides the principal pantheon of deities discussed, we also find reference to a myriads of other minor divinities in the Nala records. Sun is invariably invoked in Nala records as the witness of royal donations. In the Rājīm inscription Surya is prayed in the following words. *Jayati prathita mahibhutāṅga sironihta nija pādah, Nityodita pratāpah purnadityo*¹²⁴. Thus it appears that the worship of Sun was in vogue in Nala kingdom. In the Rithapur grant of Bhavadaṭṭavarman¹²⁵ Prajāpati (Brahmā) finds mention and in other records *Chandra* and *Tārā* are referred to indicating the prevalence of worship of these gods¹²⁶. The arehaeological evidences testify to the worship of syncretic cult icons such as Ardhanārīśvara and Hari-Hara. H. C. Das¹²⁷ believes that the rise of the later cult is "due to simultaneous growth of two important religions Śaivism and Vaiṣṇavism". We noted unprecedented rise of both the cults in south Kośala and now the syncretic sculptures found at many religious centres, such as Harisankar, Sāuntpur and Badhyanāth

123. J. P. Singh Deo, *The Focus*, pp. 9-10.

124. Sukla, *op.cit.*, p. 164.

125. *E.I.*, Vol. XIX, p. 164, Line 4.

126. Sukla, *Ibid*

127. Das, *op.cit.*, p. 303.

etc., perhaps represent the happy and prudent amalgamation of the two systems to cater to the need of discerning people.

Concept of heaven and hell :—Nala records also reflect the various metaphysical religious aspects of life and living in this and in the other world and the concept of heaven and hell. The ruler and the ruled believe that right deeds lead to heaven and irreligious action consigns one in hell.

Pāsti varṣasahasrāṇi svargenandati bhumidaḥ

*akṣeptā chānumantā chatanyeva narakevasatati*¹²⁸.

Nala kings were making lavish donations for the salvation and eternal bliss of the departed soul of their ancestors and for increasing their own religious merit for ultimate refuge in the person of god. It appears that the princes and people of the Nala kingdom were highly religious minded. Donations were made on auspicious occasion from exceptionally holy places like Prayāg or Puṣkari quite in conformity with the dictates of Dharmaśāstra.

TĪRTHAS

Archaeological and literary evidences point to the existence of a few 'tīrthas' or exceptionally holy places in the Nala territory which appear to have significantly influenced the religious life of the people. Prayāg, the confluence of Gaṅgā and Yamunā in Allahabad, though not within Nala domain, finds conspicuous mention as '*prajāpati prasādasiddhakṣetra*' (the place blest by Brahmā) in the charter of Bhavadatṭayarman.

Puṣkari :—Puṣkari (i.e. Poṭāgaḍa) the original capital city of the Nalas was known to have been a famous tīrtha as warranted in the *Mahābhārata* and other *Purāṇas*¹²⁹. According to G. Ramdas¹³⁰ 'Puṣkara' the name itself means a place of pilgrimage and in the *Mahābhārata* it is described on the supreme among tīrthas.

128. *E.I.*, Vol. XXVIII, pp. 12-17.

129. *J.B.R.S.*, Vol. XXXIII, Pt. I-II, p. 7-8.

130. *Ibid.*

*Sarvatīrthesu rājendra tirtha trailokyavisrutam
Puṣkaram nāmayaṁ vikṣyktam mahābhāgaḥ samāviśet,
Tattheiva puṣkaram rājan tīrthānāmadiruchyet.*

Further it is said that "all places of pilgrimage are pious in *Kṛitayuga* but Puṣkara is sacred in the *treta* age".

*'Sarvaṁ kṛita yuge punyaṁ
Tretayāṁ puṣkaram smirtam'.*

The existence of a ruined Śiva temple alongwith a phalanx of divinities beside two ancient tanks amidst a Kaleidoscopic jungle and serene setting at Puṣkari very much testify to such a contention. "The establishment of the footprint of Viṣṇu and of a feeding house for all kinds of tramps prove that it was a place of pilgrimage"¹³¹. Land grants are generally issued from a very holy place. The issue of two such grants from Puṣkari further corroborates the sublime sanctity of the place.

Somatīrtha :—*Somatīrtha* is identified with the present twin hamlets of Rāṇipur-Jhariāl in Balangir district of Orissa. Beglar¹³² who visited the temple town in 1874-75 counted 57 temples of varied shape and size at various stages of decay and preservation and noted about the existence of about 120 temples in early times. We made a systematic survey of the temple complex and traced out the outline of the foundation of twenty temples and we believe that no less than 200 temples of various dimensions exist here in the heyday of the sacred place over an area of 2×1 km. Beglar further writes "the occurrence of so many temples at this spot is sufficiently account for by the inscription which records the existence here of a tirth or place of pilgrimage"¹³³. He assigns the latest date of the structures to 8th century A.D. and K.N. Mahapatra¹³⁴ between 650 to 950 A.D. Now so far the antiquity of the place as a *tīrtha* is

131. *Ibid.*, p. 9, also see *Prāchīna Bastar*, p. 169.

132. *A.S.I.*, Vol. XIII, No. 49, Rāṇipur-Jhariāl.

133. *Ibid.*

134. *O.H.R.J.*, Vol. III, No. 2, p. 75.

concerned, we are inclined to date back as early as 3rd/4th century A.D. Our contention is based on the fact that *Somatīrtha* apparently, named after the presiding deity of this sacred centre Someśvara Śiva, finds mention in the *Vāmana Purāṇa*. According to Pargiter¹³⁵ the *Purāṇas* are compiled in the 3rd century A.D. and hence we can safely assign the existence of this place as a *tīrtha* in the same age. A careful study of the monuments also suggests an anterior date of a few structures¹³⁶. The same *Purāṇa* states that in *Somatīrtha*, Śiva named as Somasitalā, and Gopāl are worshipped together. The existence of Somasāgara, Someśvara Śiva temple and a Viṣṇu temple at Rāṇīpur-Jhariāl further corroborates the speculation.

Some other minor *tīrthas* of Nala age appear to have been located at Belkhandi, Saintalā, Sāuntpur and Baidyanāth in Kalahandi and Balangir districts of Orissa as is evident from the extant numerous and diverse representations of divinities of various religious systems as well as finds of other cultural assemblage of ancient heritage.

Nala Age represents the formative phase of religious exuberance and cultural efflorescence of south Kośala. Many religious traits of the Brāhmaṇic system seemed to have originated in Vindhya region and diffused to other parts. Nala kings, the architect of this epoch, were great champions of this system who incessantly cherished the idea of protecting the cows, the Brāhmaṇas along with the subjects. *Svasti go brāhmaṇa prajābhyah siddha rastu*¹³⁷. In fact, this age witnessed unprecedented religious attainments with all its manifestations and the present day culture complex of this part owes a lot to this phase.

The above discussion indicates that the Nalas though basically Śaivaites were tolerant to other religious faiths. The

135. Pargiter, *The Purāṇa Text of the Dynasties of Kali Age*, pp. XII-XVI.

136. See Chapter on Art and Architecture.

137. *E.I.*, Vol. XXVIII, pp. 12-17.

religious eclecticism inculcated by the Nalas made them very popular and helped them in administration of their dominion. In fact, they in one respect laid the foundation of a strong and powerful kingdom and on the other hand, highlighted the Brāhmaṇical religion in the line of the Guptas. Well conversant in *Śruti*, *Smṛiti*, epics and *Purāṇas*, the monarchs administered the kingdom and developed and popularised the various religious creeds.

VIII

Art and Architecture

Extant archaeological evidences throw a flood of light on the splendid art and architecture that flourished in the Nala kingdom. The ideas and ideation of the various religious movements had their reflection and echo in plastic and techtonic expressions. In the sphere of civil architecture there seems to have been admirable advancement. Capital cities were well planned with elaborate system of fortification. Religious edifices and monastic institutions appeared to have sprung up at various centres as evident from the remains and ruins revealed by excavations. Plastic art found clear expression in architecture, sculptural art as well as in cult icons. I made an extensive field study in this part (ancient south Kośala region) and traced out a large number of antiquities ascribable to the Nala Age. Here is an attempt to present them in a chronological manner.

PODĀGADA SCHOOL OF ART AND ARCHITECTURE

(C. 4th/5th Century A.D.)

The hill fort :—In the 4th/5th century A.D. the Nalas ruled over an extensive territory from their early capital Puṣkari, where even now, we find vast architectural and sculptural ruins. An imposing hill-fort (Fig. 3) containing brick bats, pottery, traces of stair-cases and structures, broken architectural members¹ water channels and rock-cut well together with the

1. *J.B.R.S.*, Vol. XXXIII, Pt. I-II, pp. 7-19.

stone inscription² of Skandavarman, stands at the centre of the ancient township amidst old vestiges spreading all around over 5 km. radius. I made a systematic surface exploration of the locality and found immense wealth of antiquities. To the east of the hill fort I could trace out the ruins of the civil township in the shape of brick bats, broken pieces of tiles and terracottas and traces of roads and streets. Pieces of bangles, semiprecious stone beads and contours of ancient tanks were further traced out here which give the impression that Puškari was a well laid out city with a formidable hill fort and a well planned civil township. On the flat surface of the hill we find numerous circular holes meant for pounding and chaffing of rice. Outline of a small square shrine is seen in front of the rock epigraph which indicates that perhaps Skandavarman³ established the footprint of Viṣṇu in this temple. An excavation of the site can expose the treasures of the temple.

Terracotta art :—A set of rock-cut stair-case leads to the northern side of the hill fort where we notice a group of broken terracottas (Fig. 4) lying at the foot of a huge rock alongwith a number of stone sculptures (now housed in a leaf hut and occasionally worshipped by the local tribes). Some of the broken terracottas, undoubtedly belong to the same age to which the inscription of Poḍāgaḍa is ascribed (i.e., 5th century A.D.). The terracotta horse has been nicely executed with the vivid representation of the ornaments with which horses used to be decorated in those days. A series of terracottas representing animals and symbols speaks of the prevalence of art in clay.

The panel of Śiva-Pārvatī :—An excellent image of Śiva and Pārvatī (Fig. 1) are projected in *yadavu* position. Śiva is holding perhaps a '*bilvafala*' in his right hand and embracing Pārvatī in his left hand. He is wearing a peculiar *mukuta*

2. *B.I.*, Vol. XXI, pp. 153-155.

3. In the Poḍāgaḍa stone inscription it is stated that Skandavarman set up the *Pādamula* of Viṣṇu in front of the epigraph. See *E.I.*, Vol. XXI, pp. 153-156.

which looks like a truncated turban. Pārvatī is seen holding a *Śivaliṅga* in her left hand and a *ketakī* flower in her right hand that touches Śiva's right arm in a romantic position of embrace. Her hairdo is knotted to both sides. She is wearing one short and one long necklace and the waist attire is strangely managed ending in a scroll design. To the right of Śiva Kārtikeya is depicted mounting his vehicle peacock. Below the left foot of Pārvatī a devotee (or attendant of Śiva) is seen sitting flanked by a lion (greatly defaced). At the centre is a bull looking strange due to erosion. Some celestial beings have been shown at the top of the panel. As a whole the sculptural composition is excellently embellished with a touch of naturalism though the ornamentation is crude. Here we notice no influence of any exotic art movement. To us it appears to be the product of local art tradition. The diction of composition is simple but eloquent. In fact, it is a beautiful piece of art work of autochthonous tradition of the early phase.

The Śaiva Shrine :—To the south-west of Poḍāgaḍa hill at a distance of about $\frac{1}{2}$ km. we find the ruins of a Śaiva shrine and a number of scattered sculptures and two old tanks. The temple (Fig. 7) as evident from the ruins consists of a small square chamber made of burnt bricks. A flight of stone steps leads to the sanctum of the temple where now stands a stone slab one metre high. The *Śaktipīṭha* and *Śivaliṅga* are missing. The extant remains give the impression that originally the temple consisted of a square sanctum, not very high and perhaps had a flat roof of wooden beams and terracotta tiles in the line of the early Gupta structures. By this time, in north India, the towering pyramidal roof of temple architecture had already made its faint appearance and bricks had been substituted by stone medium. But in the Nala kingdom the tradition was yet to take its root. As would be discussed, archaeological excavations reveal that in the 4th/5th century A.D. temples mostly consist of a sanctum often with a small *maṇḍapa* in front. The outline of a small *maṇḍapa* is also visible here.

The Yakṣa and other figures :—In front of the ruined temple under the trees numerous broken stone sculptures of Śaiva pantheon are noticed (Fig. 5). The image of *Vṛuṣabha*, Gaṇeśa and a *liṅga* emblem together with the broken sculptural fragments have been executed in the rough sand stone. Unlike the image of the exquisite Śiva-Pārvatī here the sculptural representations are lacking eloquence and elasticity. However, as evident from the Gaṇeśa image the artists had carved out the cult icons quite in conformity with the principle of iconometry as embodied in the *śāstras*. The *Yakṣa* image (Fig. 2) carved out in round even after centuries of weathering retains its sturdy form, symmetry, rigidity and artistic force. In fact, it is a rare piece of archaic plastic work where the reflection of Dumdumā and Pārkhām *Yakṣa*⁴ are discernible. The image is four-armed and is seen in sitting position wearing a beaded necklace, earrings and heavy wrist bands and armlets. The face is round with bulging closed eyes and prominent long mustache and thick curly hairs combed backward. Despite its primitive look and terse modelling the image appears to be an excellent piece of early art work with a symmetrical physical composition and grave facial expression. In comparison with the Śiva-Pārvatī image (Fig. 1) the date of this sculpture may be pushed back to around 4th century A.D. S. K. Saraswati^{4a} is also included to suggest such a date for art works of central India of Pre-Gupta age.

The Sati pillars :—In front of the ruined Śiva temple and about a kilometer to its north at another place we notice two groups of *sati*-pillars with exquisite finish. A glance at the memorial *sati* pillars (Fig. 6) gives the impression that, these are the product of the same artistic movement to which the statues of Gaṇeśa and *Yakṣa* belong. In one figure we notice two seated ladies in the act of adoration in the lower half of the sculptured slab. Despite the weathering their slender

4. Fabri, *History of the Art of Orissa*, p. 13.

4a. S. K. Saraswati, *A Survey of Indian Sculpture*, pp. 5 (0).

bodies, enchanting faces and the beautiful typical knotted hairdo appeared to have been executed by skilled artists. Though the composition is surcharged with an atmosphere of adoration and remorse being executed on a memorial *satī* pillar, even then the bodies of the ladies have been beautifully proportioned with elegance and lovely feminine tenderness and delicacy. In the eyes and the face the touch of classical simplicity is discernible and by far the statues of the ladies are superb example of early art work. In the upper half of the pillar a raised female hand is shown. In the other figure three female statues are carved out in profile in the lower half and two raised hands are shown in the upper portion.

Undoubtedly, these two sculptured slabs are memorial *satī* pillars set up in memory of some fallen heroes whose wife became *satī* by self immolation. From epigraphic evidence⁵ we know that there was severe and protracted fight between the Nālas and Vākāṭakas and the later are even known to have devastated Puṣkari and we have every reason to believe that these *satī* pillars have been erected in memory of some fallen heroes and their *satī* wives.

The statues of Śaiva pantheon originally appeared to have been installed as lateral deities in the Śaiva shrine and the lady figures of the pillars are some of the classic representations of secular art idiom. So far the date of the Poṭṭāgaḍa school of art is concerned we can assign it to the 4th/5th century A.D. The artistic style and diction discussed as well as the epigraphic evidences⁶ very much corroborate such a dating⁷. This early phase of artistic movement appears to have been inspired by

5. *E.I.*, Vol. XXI, pp. 153-156.

6. *Ibid.*, Keśaribeḍā Grant issued from Puṣkari is also ascribed to 5th century A.D., *J.B.R.S.*, Vol. XXXIV, Pt. I-II, pp. 33-42.

7. P. Acharya's opinion that from 1st century B.C. to 5th century A.D. we have not got any specimen of art in Orissa, does not appear to be correct. Acharya, *Studies in Orissan History, Archaeology and Archives*, p. 319.

the Gupta art style and indigenous tradition, stone as well as terracotta being the medium of works. The broken terracotta figures (Fig. 4) convey the impression that artistic ingenuity reflected equally on terracottas.

Viṣṇu and other sculptures :—G. Ramdas⁸ who made extensive survey of the Poḍāgaḍa area also reports about the find of a number of images of Bhairava, Umā-Maheśvara and Viṣṇu executed beautifully and assigns them to this period. At Keśaribedā which finds mention in the Grant of Arthapati (C. 465-480) Ramdas⁹ discovered a superb standing Viṣṇu image. "The face of the image is beardless and the mouth and the eyes are smiling. The smiling appears dancing on the lips. The cheeks are dimpled and made the impression more enchanting". We visited the ruined town of Keśaribedā (Fig. 8) and noticed the entire locality teeming with ancient relics testifying the contention of Ramdas that the Viṣṇu image in question (now missing) belongs to the period under discussion.

In Umakot, in the present Nilakantheśvar temple complex of Koraput we notice a few images of Śaiva pantheon ascribable to this early phase on stylistic consideration. The location of the temple amidst the ruins of the fort further corroborates the contention. Thus it appears that at Puṣkari (modern Poḍāgaḍa of Bhandāriḡuḍā revenue village) the early capital city of Nalas and in its surrounding areas there was unprecedented outburst of artistic activities of a tolerably high order.

ARTISTIC HERITAGE OF MĀRĀGUḌĀ VALLEY

The Śaktipīṭha and the Durgā temple :—Excavations on Trisul mound in Mārāguḍā Valley¹⁰ have revealed ruins of architectural and artistic heritage of this period. A shrine

8. *J.B.R.S.*, Vol XXXIII, Pt. I-II, pp. 7-19.

9. *Ibid.*, p. 13.

10. Sahu, Report of Archaeological excavation in the Upper Jonk Valley in Nawapara Subdivision of Kalahandi district, Orissa, *Satavarsiki Smaranika*, 1983, *Khadial Sahitya Samiti*, pp. vi-ix.

consisting of sanctum, porch and approach path of brick masonry unearthed by archaeological digging and assigned to 4th/5th century A.D. has come to light. Inside the *garbhagriha* and *Śaktipitha* (Fig. 10) was also found *in situ*. "Beautiful stone pillars mark the entrance to the sanctum and they also hold the roof which was of flat type but now found in ruins"¹¹. The porch is rectangular in size and plan. In the third ridge of Triśul mound complex another beautiful brick temple (Fig. 9) has been brought to light from underground. Here there is no trace of *Maṇḍapa* and it appears that shrine consists of the sanctum only. Inside the sanctum is found the two-handed image of Durgā standing in *ālīdha* attitude facing while the lion at her feet faces left. There is an inscription on the pedestal in the character of 5th century A.D. which reads 'Māheśvarī Bhavaḍa'¹².

According to the excavator¹³ "on both the temple there was no *Śikhara*s or *Vimāna*s. Both were provided with terraced roof which indicates that these are constructed prior to 500 A.D." This date is further corroborated by other allied antiquities recovered from the excavations. In the evolution of temple architecture we mark here some improvement over the earliest temple of Nala age discovered at Poḍāgaḍa. Evidence of a rectangular *maṇḍapa* attached to the main shrine is noticed here. Another significant feature of architectural development of this place is the discovery of residential buildings built on square plans beside both the temple complex evidently for the occupation of the monks and priests¹⁴. The rooms are single bedded measuring 10'-10' × 10'-10' and area are arranged round a big square hall measuring 20 ft. × 20 ft.

11. Sahu, *op.cit.*, p. vii.

12. Sahu, *Unpublished excavation report of Mārāguḍā Valley*, p. 3.

13. Sahu, Preliminary report on excavation of the Triśul mound in Kalahandi district. *Satavarsiki Smaranikā*, 1983, p. III.

14. Sahu, *op.cit.*

The Simhavāhinī Durgā :—In course of the excavations eight sculptures of goddesses and an image of *Simhavāhinī Durgā* (Fig. 9) four feet high standing on a pedestal of similar height have been recovered. The godling have been sculptured in a rough manner. The Durgā image carved out of soft red stone is found very much weathered. However, it appears that the statue in its original shape and size with the imposing archer's pose might have been an excellent piece of sculptural and artistic work. The two-armed variety of Durgā is generally assigned to 4th/5th century A.D.¹⁵ and so a similar date for this image may be convincingly suggested.

ASURGARH FORT AND ITS ART

Asurgarh fort of Kalahandi district brought to light by excavations reveals the plan and lay out of a formidable fortification and a civil township of the early Christian centuries. As gleaned from the excavation report¹⁶ it is almost square in plan and covers an extensive area of more than half a square km. The ramparts as found at present are about 4 metres in width and fifteen to fifty metres in height and are made of roubles and mud with brick facing¹⁷. A huge tank exists nearby and a moat encircles the whole fort which had four wide gates in four cardinal directions. In the residential sector floor of house paved with brick bats together with varieties of antiquities were found, which indicate that houses in early times were well paved out with brick bats. Another site in the same sector brought to light a circular brick structure 40 feet in diameter. The excavator indicates it as a temple dedicated to mother goddess¹⁸. Very probably the shrine had wooden roof as indicated by grooves for wooden pillars. The structural ruins

15. H. C. Das, *Cultural Development in Orissa*, pp. 94-96.

16. N. K. Sahu, *Archaeological Findings in Asurgarh, New Dimension of Tourism in Orissa*, 1976, pp. 9-12.

17. Sahu, *op.cit.*, p. 9.

18. *Ibid.*, p. 11.

and other antiquities unearthed have been assigned to circa 4th/5th century A.D. N. K. Sahu¹⁹ is further inclined to suggest that the township was a flourishing centre in the days of Nala king Vyāghrarāja (C. 330-370) and Tustikāra, a ruler of unknown dynasty and is ascribed to circa 5th century A.D.

A comparative study of the architectural form of the temples described above gives us a clear idea of the shape and size of early temples which mostly consist of a brick structure and a flat roof. In building of Śakti shrine at Mārāguḍā we notice an improvement i.e. the addition of a small rectangular *maṇḍapa* in the temple style. To us it appears that the circular brick temple traced out at Asurgarh perhaps represents the earliest stage of the later famous circular Yoginī temple forms. In the sphere of civil architecture we mark that the capital cities used to consist of a citadel area and a residential sector.

The discovery of a number of terracotta figurines of goddess and animals from Asurgarh suggests that the terracotta art was quite popular in this period. With this background of architectonic and sculptural development of this period (4th/5th century A.D.), we enter into the next stage of artistic movement in the 5th/6th century A.D. Our knowledge of the artistic efflorescence of this epoch is mostly based on our own extensive field study of the extant ruins of this part. We have already noticed that the pyramidal *śikhara* of the temple is yet to emerge in the Nala kingdom and bricks have not been substituted for stone in temple architecture. But in this epoch as would be discussed the curvilinear *śikhara* developed and artistic activities assumed its momentum.

TEMPLE ARCHITECTURE OF 5TH/6TH CENTURY A.D.

Recently we have traced out the ruins of two temple complexes (two) at Tentel-Khunti (Fig. 13) in Bolangir district and

19. *Ibid.*, p. 12.

(one) at Deheli (Fig. 48) in Kalahandi district of Orissa. At Tentelkhunti ruins of the stone temples are lying scattered over a small area not very far of Tel Valley which is very rich in antiquities. As is evident from the ruins, the temples [Fig. 13(a)] appear to have a low *śikhara* over the sanctum. It is entirely made of stone. The size of the *Śaktipīṭha* and the volume of ruins give a fair idea of the shape of the temple which seems to have some sort of lofty terraced *śikhara*²⁰. The *āmalaka*, the crowning member of the early *śikhara* temple is not found in the ruins and to us it seems that originally the temple had a squat *śikhara*, formed by corbelling of stone slabs in reduced pattern and giving the shape of a sort of pyramidal *śikhara*. Unless excavated, we cannot say precisely as to whether there was a *maṇḍapa* in front of the cell in the present state of our knowledge. However, the possibility of existence of such a small entrance hall cannot be ruled out altogether. A look at the figure 13(b) indicates that this temple was quite big and was surmounted with an *āmalaka* (as is suggested by the extant ruins). Here and there amidst ruins occasional carving is also noticed. A square stone pillar is seen under the *śaktipīṭha*, which very probably appears to be the part of the door jamb or the frontal *maṇḍapa*. The volume of the ruins spreading over a big area suggests that *śikhara* had assumed an appreciable height being surmounted by an *āmalaka*. Very probably, the *kalasa* was yet to be executed on the *āmalaka*²¹. Here in the ruins we could find out the traces of a pillared *maṇḍapa* by surface exploration. On the grounds of stylistic consideration we are inclined to assign these two early monuments in a broader chronological horizon of 5th/6th century A.D. Our dating is further corroborated by the finds of potteries, semi-precious stone beads and a number of old sculptures found in this locality. Similar type of antiquities are also discovered by us at Degāon not very far off Tentelkhunti

20. See figure 2, Fabri, *op.cit.*, p. 120.

21. See the same figure for probable appearance of the original temple.

alongwith sculptural remains. Degāon finds mention as Debhogaka Kṣetra in the Terasiṅgā charter of Tustikāra²². Thus a sort of contemporaneity of Debhogaka (present Degāon village) village and Tentelkhunti in ancient time is also established.

The next phase of the evolution of temple architecture in this part is suggested by the ruins of Deheli near Asurgarh in Kalahandi district. Here we notice (Fig. 48) the plain door jambs and lintel of a narrow temple doorway. The traces of rough curving as evident from the ruins further indicate that some sort of sculptural decoration was made in parts of the temple and gate-ways. The ruins of the place also suggest that temple building had assumed bigger dimension with a distinct and developed entrance and perhaps with a pyramidal spire of appreciable height.

The next stage of development of temple architecture in South Kośala is perhaps represented by the dilapidated temple complex of Sankusgarh. Here we find beautifully carved out *āmalakas* (Fig. 14) together with a few specimens of architectonic sculptures. At this stage the body of the temple seemed to have been decorated with beautiful sculptural motifs. As regards the development of civil architecture and artistic activities of this epoch, we do not have any precise information in the present state of our knowledge. However, it appears that the earlier trends continued in these fields.

ART MOVEMENT OF 6TH/7TH CENTURY A.D.

In the 6th/7th century A.D. there seems to have been spectacular efflorescence in the field of art and architecture. Colossal and skyhigh temples embellished with numerous and diverse architectonic sculptures were appeared to have been built in South Kośala as is testified by the ruins found at various centres. Numerous statues vibrant with life and gliding move-

22. Tustikāra appears to be subordinate chief of Nalas and is assigned to 5th century A.D.

ment and marked with elasticity and elegance were carved out by skillful artist of the Nala kingdom.

At Degāon in Bolangir district extensive vestiges are traced around Yogisāgar of a ruined temple and a fortified township locally called Itāgarh. There is a medieval temple called Yogeśvara Śiva temple beside the big Yogisāgar tank, where we find a number of sculptures ascribable to the 6th/7th century A.D. on stylistic consideration. The sculptures scroll motif (Fig. 15) appears to be the part of an early temple structure. The figure of the eight-handed Bhairava and the image of the unidentified image carved out in rough sandstone give the impression that the artists had yet not attained perfection in execution of cult icons. As said elsewhere Degāon finds mention in a record of 5th Century A.D. and antiquities in the shape of pottery, semiprecious stone beads etc. ascribable to 6th/7th century A.D. have been found in its vicinity and hence a similar date for the illustrated art works cannot be ruled out altogether.

Mahāsena in art :—Kārtikeya or Mahāsena finds frequent mention in the Nala epigraphs²³. Interestingly we find diverse and numerous sculptural representation of Kārtikeya image (Figs. 16, 17, 18, 19) in this part testifying to the popularity of the cult icon. The Kārtikeya image (Fig. 16) presently found inside the Kośaleśwar temple, Baidyanāth in Bolangir district is categorically ascribed to the 6th century A.D. by the famous art historian Charles Fabri²⁴ on the stylistic consideration of the wig type head-dress. The statue is one of the excellent piece of art work of this epoch. We discovered a six-headed and four-armed Kārtikeya image (Fig. 17) at Dhubalparā in Pātnagarh Sub-Division of Bolangir district. The image is quite imposing adorned with a long headed necklace and wrist band. Another interesting six-headed and twelve-handed Kārtikeya figure (Fig. 18) is found in the Śiva

23. Keśaribeḍā and Rithapur grants.

24. Fabri, *op.cit.*, p. 43.

temple of Khadial in Kalahandi district. These varieties of figures with heavy ornaments and multiplication of heads and hands may be ascribed to the 7th century A.D.²⁵ The war-god Kārtikeya is a deity of absorbing interest and great antiquity. He is portrayed with six heads even in the early coins of Yaudheyas²⁶. In the *Gāyatrī* hymns he is known by various names such as Kumāra, Kārtikeya and Skanda²⁷ and in the *Dharmasūtra* of Baudhāyana²⁸ by such names as Saṁmukha, Jayanta, Viśākhā, Subramanya and Mahāsenā. In the iconographic representation he is shown with two, four, six, eight or twelve hands²⁹. In the Nala kingdom he was mostly known by Mahāsenā.

The Śaiva pantheon :—We find a large number of sculptures belonging to Śaiva pantheon in this part. Śiva in his manifestation as Bhaivara is represented in several forms. The worship of Śiva was very popular in Nala kingdom as testified by numismatic and epigraphic evidence³⁰ and consequently several iconographic forms were carved out in stone. The exquisite couchant *Vriṣava* (Fig. 22) represented on the coins are the earliest examples of artistic creation of the bull emblem on the coins. The specimens have been convincingly dated between 4th to 6th century A.D. In the medium of stone we find many forms of the deities of the pantheon executed in lucid manner. On the basis of our own field study we present here a few sculptures of Śaiva pantheon suggesting a broader and tentative time bracket of 6th/7th century A.D.³¹

25. *Ibid.*

26. Bhagavati Sahai, *Iconography of minor Hindu and Buddhist deities*, p. 116.

27. R. S. Gupte, *Iconography of the Hindu, Buddhist and Jains*, p. 46.

28. Sahai, *op.cit.*, p. 99.

29. Gupte, *op.cit.*, p. 46.

30. Edengā and Kuliā hoard of gold coins, Rithapur and Keṣaribedā grant.

31. A neck to neck comparison with the art movement of Bhubaneswar and coastal belt of Orissa may not be made. In our opinion the

The Bhairava image of Insā (Fig. 23) near Sālebhaṭā in Bolangir district appears to be one of the early example of art work of this phase. The statue has very close resemblance in the diction of execution with the Bhairava image (Fig. 15) of Degāon. At Sālebhaṭā an exquisite sculpture of Viṣṇu³² and an excellent piece of twenty-armed Durgā³³ image alongwith a large number of other figures have been discovered and it appears that Sālebhaṭā was an active centre of art activities and the Insā Bhairava image appears to be an early work of this centre.

This figure (Fig. 24) of Bhairava discovered at Sāuntpur in Bolangir district is an improved specimen of the plastic representation of the cult icon. The figure is four-armed. The lower hands are broken and in the upper hands the deity is holding two *āyudhas* perhaps an *ankuśa* and a noose. A *jaṭāmukuta* adorned the head and the tongue is shown as protruding from the mouth. His *vāhana*, dog is standing nearby. He is decorated with garlands, ear ornaments and waist garment. The deity standing with ease is a beautiful piece of artistic creation. Another figure of Bhairava (Fig. 25) found in the same place is a still better representation of the cult icon. Here Śiva-Bhairava is very probably portrayed as Kṣetrapāla³⁴ holding in his upper hands drum (*dambaru*) and trident (*śula*) and in the lower hands a *gadā*. The image is profusely treated with garments and ornaments. Quite intact this figure is a marvellous piece of plastic work.

Bhairava being the malevolent manifestation (*ghora* or *ugra*) of Śiva very often is represented in fearful iconographic and artistic form. T. A. Gopinath Rao³⁵ and J. Banerjia³⁶ refer to

art movement of south Kōśala during the period under discussion belongs to an altogether different tradition having affiliation with the art movement of the illustrious Guptas.

32. K.H.R.J., Vol. I, No. 3, p. 247, see figure.

33. H. C. Das, *op.cit.*, p. 98.

34. Gupte, *op.cit.*, p. 25.

35. T. A. Gopinath Rao, *Elements of Hindu Iconography*, II, pp. 177ff.

36. J. Banerjia, *The Development of Hindu Iconography*, p. 466.

numerous forms of this manifestation of Śiva. The eight-headed figure of Bhairava found at Pātnagarh in Bolangir district appears to be a typical representation of Baṭuka Bhairava described in the *Sāradātilaka tantra*³⁷. Here the image is shown as riding a dead body. In his eight hands he is holding various āyudhas such as goad, sword, trident, fire and bow etc. and his face is projected with fang³⁸. Although the fearful aspect is not that radiant, yet the symmetrical and precise composition of the sculpture is appreciable from of art point of view.

The *urdhva liṅga* Śiva image (Fig. 26) recently discovered at Sankusgarh in Kalahandi district is an excellent specimen of Śiva sculpture. The image is presented in standing position adorned with a *jaṭā mukuta* and on his two sides two attendants have been carved out. J. P. Singdeo³⁹ is inclined to suggest that the deity is very probably the central figure of a lost early circular temple of Kalahandi region. In our opinion this figure may be assigned to the period under discussion.

The Gaṇeśa image (Fig. 27) discovered at Rengāli near Dhubalparā, where the six-headed Kārtikeya image (Fig. 17) was also found in Pātnagarh Sub-Division of Bolangir district, is a good specimen of art. The figure is executed in a rough sand stone and is now seen in an extremely worn out condition. However, in its original shape the sculpture appears to have been a consummate artistic production as is testified by the symmetrical physical composition marked with naturalism.

Trivikram Viṣṇu :—The image of Trivikram Viṣṇu (Fig. 32) is by far a unique piece of sculptural art. At present the statue is found in a small shed amidst the ruined temple complex at Sāuntpur. P. C. Rath⁴⁰ assigns the image in-question between

37. B. Sahai *op.cit.*, pp. 120-121,

38. J. P. Singdeo, *The Focus*, 1983, pp. 1-13.

39. *Ibid.* In view of the rich discovery of various relics from Sankusgarh area Singdeo's suggestion may not be ruled out altogether. Further excavation and research in this tract may throw more light in this matter.

40. *K.H.R.J.*, Vol. II, Nos. 2-3, pp. 130-133.

500 to 600 A.D. However, we are inclined to suggest a slight later date in the time bracket of 6th/7th century A.D. on stylistic consideration, especially due to exuberance of ornamentation⁴¹. Here Viṣṇu is depicted as *Virāṭarupā* with the right leg firmly planted and the left one thrown upwards as if to attack the heaven. Perhaps Vāli and his wife Vindhyāvali are shown below the upraised leg, granting the desired land. The image is embellished with exuberance of ornamentation. A long garland hangs down to the thigh. The left hand touches the foot of the upraised leg and the hands are bedecked with beaded armlets and wrist bands. A matching *Kaṭivastra* in the shape of a band encircles the waist portion. The body is beautifully proportioned and the whole composition is marked with elegance, linear rhythm and gliding movement. In any reckoning it is a superb example of classic art diction. In this sculpture there is a happy blend and reflection of the artistic trends and tendencies of the Kośaliyan and Kalingan palistic idioms.

Secular art diction :—The simple but subtle figure of the damsel pulsating with the sap of life (Fig. 35) is an admirable specimen of secular sculptural production. The statue is found at Sankusgarh in Kalahandi district. With the charming standing posture the loosely fit in thin drapery, the consummate display of the limbs with the interplay of shade of gliding movement and reflection of linear rhythm, the figure is by far a simple but excellent piece of plastic work. In the absence of fine ornamentation in its execution the image is datable to C. 6th/7th century A.D.

Temple building movement of 6th/7th Century A.D. :—So far the development of temple architecture in this phase is concerned, we are inclined to suggest on the basis of our own field study that keeping in pace with the evolution of temple building in central India, there was significant improvement in its tech-

41. Fabri, *op.cit.*, p. 42.

tonic evolution in South Kośala⁴². The ruins of the Kośaleśvar Śiva temple at Sāuntpur (Fig. 37) give the impression that a regular *śikhara* temple with a rectangular pillared *maṇḍapa* had already developed. The figure 21 shows that the panel of *Navagraha*⁴³ had been introduced on the lintel of the entrance. The figure 37 gives the impression that the pillars are profusely carved with various motifs. The extant ruins at this site suggest the existence of a pyramidal *śikhara*, a rectangular pillared *maṇḍapa* and a smaller outer vestibule⁴⁴. We find representation of the various planets on the lintel of Pipariya and Nachna doorway which are ascribed to the early part of the 6th century A.D.⁴⁵ and so here the finds of the planet slab need not be considered a later innovation. Furthermore a careful comparison of the ruins of Sāuntpur temple with the ruins of Devrāni and Jethāni temples of Talā of Chhatisgarh⁴⁶ (parts of ancient south Kośala, now in Madhya Pradesh) located roughly half way between Mallar and Rājim gives the impression that both the temples were of similar type and are not far apart in time. This contention is further corroborated by the find of similar Kirtimukhā⁴⁷ representation and foliage motif in the pillar decoration (Fig. 37). The temple of Talā is dated to 6th century A.D.⁴⁸ and so a similar date for Sāuntpur temple may not be unreasonable. Suffice it to say here that by 6th/7th century A.D. the evolution of temple architecture seemed to

42. The evolution of temple architecture in south Kośala during the period under discussion is essentially inspired by central and north Indian tradition.
43. Since the panel is broken, it is not known precisely if nine, eight or seven planets adorned its lintel.
44. For similar plan see figure 13, J. G. Williams, *The Art of Gupta India*, pp. 124-128.
45. William, *op.cit.*, p. 116.
46. *Ibid.*, pp. 124-25.
47. *Ibid.*, pp. 127-28, See
48. *Ibid.*

have assumed a definite shape and size in this part keeping pace with the temple building movement of central India.

The next stage of evolution of temple building appears to have been represented by Kośaleśvara temple of Badyanāth. Charles Fabri⁴⁹ believes that originally it was a Buddhist Shrine of brick masonry and later on by 6th/7th century the temple was converted into a Brāhmaṇic shrine. We find it difficult to agree with Fabri as there is no valid basis for such a contention. D. R. Das⁵⁰ is inclined to suggest the date of the temple between C. 875 to C. 950 A.D. However, in our opinion the temple be dated to the later part of the 6th/7th century A.D. The suggestion of Fabri that it was a Buddhist shrine prior to 6th/7th century A.D. is not acceptable to us. We made a systematic surface exploration in and around Badyanāth and could not trace out any Buddhist vestige. Very seriously we examined an exposed section in the Tel valley just behind the temple. It is a small mound containing cultural assemblage of early historical period in the shape of pottery and iron implements as well. Thus the antiquity of the place goes to remote time but Buddhist affinity of the temple could not be established.

We have already suggested that the evolution of the temple architecture in south Kośala had close connection with the same tradition of Madhyabhārat. In the previous pages we noticed the semblance of Sāuntpur and Talā temples, both situated in the peripheral region of south and north part of ancient south Kośala country respectively. The Devarāni temple of Talā is tolerably in a good state of preservation. "Here fragments of brick that surround the base today suggests that a brick super structure rested upon stone wall"⁵¹. Now by a comparison of the pillar design, door jamb, lintel, jamb of inner door-way and the style and lay out of the whole

49. Fabri, *op.cit.*, pp. 41-43.

50. D. R. Das, *Temples of Orissa*, pp. 15-19, pp. 39-46.

51. William, *op.cit.*, p. 125.

temple⁵² with the Kośaleśvara temple, one will notice striking similarity between the two. It appears that originally the later shrine was a structure of brick and stone masonry as rightly suggested by Fabri. The main shrine of Kośaleśvar at Badhyanāth is permanently lost. What now remains is the *maṇḍapa* of brick and stone construction. The doorway consists of jambs and a stone lintel with a *gajalakṣmī* motif. Inside the *Mukhaśālā* we notice twelve pillars round the hall and four at the centre, where a raised platform seemed to have been added much later. On the north and south there is *Kakṣāsana* projections with balustrated carved railings surmounted by flat roof resting on pillars. A doorway was originally connecting the sanctum and the *maṇḍapa*. In this inner door jamb Gaṅgā and Yamunā have been beautifully represented and the lintel is carved with planet figures. The internal evidence of the voluptuous sculptural representations also support the date of the temple assigned to the 6th/7th century A.D. According to Fabri⁵³ the wig style head dress executed in the 'Kārtikeya' image of this temple belongs to a period between 550 to 650 A.D. The moderate ornamentations also corroborate this contention. Unfortunately, most of the scholars⁵⁴ have assigned a much later date ranging between 9th to 11th century A.D. to this temple keeping in view to the chronological sequence of the evolution of the temple architecture of Bhubaneswar and its adjoining area, which is altogether of a different artistic and stylistic tradition (i.e. of Kalingan order). But in sharp contrast the temple is a product of a distinct tradition of Kośaliyan order consisting of a sanctum, small vestibule, a pillared *maṇḍapa*, a

52. *Ibid.*, Plates 192 to 197.

53. Fabri, *op.cit.*, p. 43.

54. D. R. Das, *Ibid.* ; P. Acharya, *op.cit.*, p. 342 ; D. Mitra, Archaeological treasures in Orissa, *Orissa, Past and Present*, ed., P. Parija and S. C. Mukherji, p. 49 ; Vidya Dehejia, *Early Stone temples of Oriss*, p. 136f.

vestibule and a gateway in horizontal plane and plan⁵⁵. In our opinion this temple marked the culmination of the temple building activities of this phase, and the movement in the next phase (i.e., 7th/8th century A.D.) assumed new and wide dimension both in horizontal and vertical plane and temples of this part appear to have assumed a form of synthetic architectonic composition of Kośaliyan and Kaliṅgan orders. The Nalas who were the master of this tract seemed to have been the patron of the artistic movement⁵⁶. Most of the Śiva shrines are called Kośaleśvar Śiva temple in this area. It is probable to think that Śiva was perceived as the 'lord of Kośala kingdom' and a sort of Kośaliyan order of temple architecture also seemed to have developed here as well.

PLASTIC AND MONUMENTAL EFFLORESCENCE OF 7TH/8TH CENTURY A.D.

Rājim and Saintalā :—In the 7th century A.D. political activities of the Nalas mostly centred round Rājim, Mārāguḍā and parts of Bolangir region. In this area huge artistic and architectural relics have of late come to light some of which on stylistic consideration can be assigned in a probable time range of 7th/8th century A.D. From epigraphic evidence⁵⁷ it is known that Rājim was a centre of Vaiṣṇavism. The beautiful four-headed Viṣṇu image of Rājim temple is an excellent piece of artistic composition. The deity is shown holding *śaṁkha*, *chakra*, *gadā* and *padma*. The image of Varāha, Vāmana and Nrusiṁha incarnations carved out in the walls of the temple complex⁵⁸ are equally beautiful in their elegance and execution. In the execution of the Nārāyaṇa

55. See Figure 13, William, *op.cit.*, p. 126.

56. L. K. Panda, Speculates that the temple of Badyanāth was built under the patronage of Bhavadatta in the 6th century, A.D., *Śaivism in Orissa*, p. 82.

57. *E.I.*, Vol. XXVI, pp. 46-59.

58. H. L. Sukla, *Prāchīna Bastar*, pp. 161-164.

image we discern marked stylistic semblance with the famous Birañchi-Nārāyaṇa statue of Sālebhaṭṭā. P. C. Rath⁵⁹ dates the statue in question to the 3rd/4th century A.D. In our opinion his dating does not appear to be correct. The execution of profuse ornamentation and the treatment of decorated drapery is generally dated to about 7th/8th century A.D. S. K. Sarasvati and Stella Kramrisch also suggest a similar date for the sporting Yakṣa figure of Rājiv Lochan temple^{59a}. At Saintalā⁶⁰ in Bolangir district extensive ruins of the temple complex and a doorway alongwith a number of sculptures are found. Of these the two broken Viṣṇu image display rare artistic workmanship. Unfortunately both the specimens are broken. However, in one composition we find the Viṣṇu image without the head (Fig. 33) and in the other one (Fig. 34) the subsidiary deities surrounding the main image. P. C. Rath⁶¹ who discovered them writes "in both the statues Viṣṇu stands on a lotus. Below this lotus there are representations of a fish and a tortoise and below them there are some worshippers. On both sides of the relief, there is the representation of Garuḍa to the left and of a saint probably Nārada to the right. On both sides are standing the figures of Lakṣmī with a lotus holding the stalk in her left hand and Sarasvatī with a musical instrument". Rath suggests the date of Saintalā images to 3rd century A.D. However, such a dating appears untenable in view of the marked late artistic characteristics of the statues. Charles Fabri⁶² who made a passing reference to the ruins of the place suggests a tentative date to 11th century A.D. On consideration of the exuberance of ornamentations, decorated drapery, linear rhythm and twist of the body which are the well reckoned characteristic

59. *K.H.R.J.*, Vol. II, Nos, 2-3, pp. 127-130, see figures of Nārāyaṇa.

59a. Kramrisch, *The Art of India*, Plate 106; Sarasvati, *op.cit.*, p. 160.

60. *K.H.R.J.*, II, 2-3, pp. 127-30.

61. *Ibid*

62. Fabri, *op.cit.*, p. 178.

features of 7th/8th century plastic diction⁶³ we are reasonably inclined to assign them to the same period. The extant remains of this site indicate that Saintalā was a notable centre of artistic activities in this period. The Rājim group of Nala rulers were champions of Vaiṣṇavism and it is probable to think that the artistic activities of this Vaiṣṇavite centre received their patronage.

Belkhandi :—Belkhandi⁶⁴ in Kalahandi district has yielded a rich and diverse phalanx of sculptures. The Saptamātrikā figures discovered by excavations have been executed quite in conformity with the dictum of iconometry and the respective vehicle of the deities have been faithfully represented below them. The statues in standing posture have been nicely presented. The Hara-Pārvatī figures (Figs. 38, 39, 40) are marvellous specimens of plastic work of the classic tradition. In the composition Hara-Pārvatī are seen seated on a lotus seat in *lalitāsana* in a jovial mood. Their celestial countenance is beaming with spontaneous smile and the manifestation of the divine couple in the sculpture is so realistic that it beggars description and by any reckoning this work deserves to be considered as a superb artistic creation. Here the artist seems to have achieved classic balance in the execution of the subtle body and limbs. *Vṛiṣava* and *Gaṇas* are seen represented below the statues. K. N. Mahapatra⁶⁵ assigns these statues to the 6th/7th century A.D. and attributes the monuments of Belkhandi to the Somavamśis. As we have discussed elsewhere that by this time Belkhandi area was under the sway of the Nalas and, therefore, some of the plastic works of this place could be assigned to the epoch of the Nalas. Beglar⁶⁶ suggests that “they (Belkhandi images) approach most nearly in execution and design to the superb sculptures at Rājim, at

63. *Ibid.*, p. 42.

64. *K.H.R.J.*, Vol. II, Nos. 2-3, pp. 165-172.

65. *Ibid.*

66. *Ibid.*

Śavaripura, at Seorinarayan and especially at Kharod in the central province" and assigns the date to the 6th century A.D. We have already discussed that on stylistic ground Rājīm sculptures could be assigned to the 7th/8th century A.D. and so a similar date for some sculptural works of this place may be assigned.

Tarbhā Degāon—Recently we discovered a ruined temple complex at Tarbhā Degāon in Bolangir district⁶⁷ containing a few statues at various stages of preservation. The broken but beautiful fragmentary sculptural composition (Fig. 36) is an exuberant specimen of plastic diction. The central deity is missing. To us, however, the dwarf kneeling figure appears to be a winged Garuḍa and so very probably the missing image was a Viṣṇu figure. The mutilated lady figure appears to be either Sarasvatī or Lakṣmī. At present the local people worship it as Khambeśvarī devī. The wooden post seen behind the figure is supposed to be the original seat of the lady of the post. From the point of view of art it is an excellent creation. The female figure executed with an interplay of linear rhythm and gliding movement combined with tenderness and delicacy of subtle physical composition, displays rare artistic skill and dexterity. The intricate floral scroll and curl design entwining the celestial beings at the bottom of the composition is at once charming and elegant. All these artistic traits speak of the tradition of the 7th/8th century A.D.

The Dancing Scene :—The excellent frieze (Fig. 45) of an unknown provenance now in the collection of J. P. Singdeo, Khariar is a superb example of plastic idiom of this period. The presentation of the dancing scene is exceptionally realistic and admirably accurate. The sinuous movement of the dancers as well as the musicians is lively and thrilling rendering the whole composition into a living orchestra of immense rapture.

67. A copper plate grant is also reported to have been discovered from this site. Its whereabouts however, could not be traced out.

The trait of the wavy bodily movement and sinuous attitude are some of the marked art characteristics of this age⁶⁸.

Pātnāgarh :—Pātnāgarh in Bolangir district is another important centre of artistic activities. Here we find variety of plastic representations ranging in date from 6th to 14th century A.D.⁶⁹ Some of the excellent sculptures of Kośaleśvar temple could be assigned to 6th/7th century A.D. Charles Fabri⁷⁰ believes that fragments and pieces of many old Buddhist buildings have been fixed in the temple. On examination however, we could not trace the Buddhist affinity of the architectonic sculptures of this place. In our opinion the present Kośaleśvar temple appeared to have been built on the ruins of an earlier temple of Badyanāth and Sāuntpur type. Fabri is inclined to suggest the date of the sculptured pillar found outside the Nandi *maṇḍapa* to 7th/8th century A.D. The *Ardhanārīśvara* image, the charming *Sura-sundarī* waiting impatiently with remores for her beloved and the parrot sitting nearby perhaps enchanting words of endearment is a beautiful pattern by itself. Similarly moving and exhilarating is the panel on the doorway of the *jagamohana* where we see a loving couple with their maids and messengers displaying flamboyant romantic rapture. Despite the touch of eroticism the composition is marked with a subline aura of controlled love with innate sense and loving tenderness.

Badyanāth :—In Kośaleśvar temple complex of Badyanāth we find some of the marvellous sculptural representations. The superb flying celestial couples carved on the demi medallion canopy (Fig. 47) are fantastic artistic creations. *Vidyādhara* pairs are seen floating in the sky with a garland in their hands. The lighter style and a more attenuated form adorned with exuberant ornamentation seemingly render the composition weightless so as to float in the celestial space. Stella Kram-

68. Fabri, *op.cit.*, p. 42.

69. *Ibid.*, p. 70.

70. *Ibid.*

risch⁷¹ is inclined to assign similar flying *Vidyādhara*s of Svarga Bhrahma temple, Alampur (Fig. 46) to the late 7th century A.D. A look at the two figures (Figs. 46 and 47) almost with identical stylistic composition beyond any shadow of doubt convinces that the two art works are not far apart in time and so we can without any chance of error assign the Badyanāth *Vidyādhara* couple in the same chronological horizon. The execution of the amorous (Fig. 51) statue is an exquisite example of secular plastic diction. Fabri⁷² remarks that the beautiful shape of the standing lovers and the "gentleness and tenderness with which the man holds in his hand the lovely foot of the girl, a most unusual composition to which I know no parallel." The purpose of the provocative *mithuna* representation in the temple is perhaps to stir the worshipper, to awaken and hold his attention so as to transplant him from the mundane plane to the transcendental celestial world of love and supreme reality. The *sundarī* (belle) (Fig. 53) looking on the mirror and applying vermilion on her forehead, standing in a graceful entwined posture with the sparkling smile dancing on the lip, combined with the beautiful display of balanced and bulging breast, the sculpture is by far a masterpiece of plasticity of this period.

The great artistic excellence of this age is also testified by Hiuen Tsang who visited south Kośala in the 1st half of the seventh century A.D. Describing a monastery he writes "the monastery had cloisters and lofty halls, with temples containing gold life size images of the Buddha of perfect artistic beauty"⁷³.

Harisaṅkar and Narsimhanāth :—So far the evolution of the temple architecture in this phase is concerned there appears to have been significant development in this part as testified by the

71. Stella Kramrisch, *The Art of India*, pp. 38-39. See plate 77 of the same work.
72. Fabri, *op.cit.*, p. 43. The original Badyanāth temple has been lost. Some sculptures of slight later date now adorned parts of the present complex.
73. Watters, II, p. 201.

ruins of Saintalā and Belkhandi⁷⁴. The Rājivalochan temple at Rājim, according to Williams and Stadtnr indicates a late 7th century chronological position⁷⁵ and so the construction of the temple could be assigned to the Nala rulers whose epigraph is found here. As suggested in the previous pages, the original Kośaleśvar temple of Pāṭnāgarh on stylistic consideration of the few extant pillars and sculptures may be assigned to this phase. If the suggestion of Charles Fabri⁷⁶ is to be taken into consideration then it appears that at Narsimhanāth also there existed a temple of 7th/8th century A.D. with a sanctum, a pillared *maṇḍapa* and an outer vestibule with a gateway. Fabri however, associates that ornamental pillars of the Narsimhanāth *maṇḍapa* with Buddhism which does not seem to be plausible as we do not get any tangible trace of Buddhist vestiges at this site. As indicated by local tradition Narsimhanāth as well as Hariśaṅkar on the two sides of the Gandhamardan range were two Brāhmaṇic religious *tīrthas* since remote antiquity as early as the days of the Rāmāyaṇa. This area was part of the Nala kingdom during the period between 5th and 7th century A.D. and so the twin Śaivite and Vaiṣṇavite religious centres of Hariśaṅkar⁷⁷

74. K.H.R.J., Vol. II, Nos. 2-3, pp. 123-134 and pp. 165-172.

75. Williams, *op.cit.*, p. 173.

76. Fabri, *op.cit.*, pp. 38-39.

77. At Hariśaṅkar we now find numerous sculptures housed in the tiled shed near the temple. Many of them on stylistic consideration can be assigned between 6th to 8th century A.D. Now no trace of any ancient temple is noticed here. However, the present outer gateway though heavily plastered shows close resemblance with the gateway of Mukteśvar temple in design which suggest that probably a temple existed here. The name of the place Hari-Śaṅkar indicates that the syncretic cult of Hari and Śaṅkar was popular here. The Nalas were great champions of both the cults so the development of a centre of the syncretic cult in their kingdom under their patronage may not be ruled out. The beautiful image of Gaṅgā's descent through Viṣṇu and Śiva is another plastic representation of the synthesis of the two cults. The image is, however, said to have been brought from Rāṇīpur-Jhariāl.

as well as Narasimhanāth⁷⁸ respectively seem to have grown up under the patronage of the Nalas. Fabri⁷⁹ by a comparative study of the artistic traits of Vaitāl Deul and Paraśurameśvar temple of Bhubaneswar and that of the four old pillars presently found in the pillared *maṇḍapa* of Narasimhanāth suggests a date about 600-650 A.D. To us it appears that a temple existed at the site during the period under discussion and over its ruins the present Somavaṁśī monument has grown up, perhaps on collapse of the earlier construction⁸⁰.

Rāṇīpur-Jhariāl :—Coming over to Rāṇīpur-Jhariāl the temple town of south Kośala, we emphatically point out that some of the monuments belonged to this period. We have already discussed that Rāṇīpur-Jhariāl as a *īrtha* has great antiquity⁸¹.

The 'Lehāriguḍī temple' (Fig. 55) now in utter deplorable condition, with its semicylindrical roof like the Vaitāl temple of Bhubaneswar of the Drāvidian *Śālaśikhara* order (Kaliṅga Khākharā order) furnishes an anterior datum line of the building activities of this place. The Vaitāl temple⁸² of Bhubaneswar with its developed architectonic and architectonic artistic characteristics is being dated to the 6th century A.D. A similar date or even an anterior date, atleast by half a century for the 'Lehāriguḍī'⁸³ of Rāṇīpur-Jhariāl is not wide of the mark in view of the obvious archaic and early tectonic characteristics of the temple. Sculptural representation is conspicuous

78. The present colossal temple is a Somavaṁśī monument. The early temple of 7th/6th century A.D. of which a few pillars now exist, appeared to have been built in the Nala age.

79. Fabri, *op.cit.*, pp. 33-39, 122-137.

80. Recently, we noticed traces of a ruined structure while examining the fallen Garuḍa pillar. It is frail suggestive evidence of the contention.

81. See page.

82. D. Mitra, *Bhubaneswar*, pp. 36-42 ; K. C. Panigrahi, *Archaeological remains of Bhubaneswar* ; Fabri, *op.cit.*, pp. 132-137.

83. The footprint emblem beside the temple also suggests the remote antiquity of the shrine.

by its absence in this temple which in our opinion appears to be a marked feature of the early temple architecture of this type of Śākta shrine, and so we are tempted to suggest a date by the close of the 5th or beginning of 6th century A.D., for Lehāriguḍi. The antiquity of temple building activities of this place thus, could be convincingly taken back at least to 5th century A.D. to the days of the Nalas, who were having undisputed sway in this tract as late as 7th century A.D. During 6th/7th and 7th/8th century A.D. the movement appeared to have continued unabated and the literal hundreds of extant temples of varied dimension at various stages of preservation and the similar number of already vanished ones⁸⁴, the construction of many specimens could be assigned to this glorious epoch of the Nalas. The date and author of the famous Indralāṭh brick temple (Fig. 56) as well as the hypaethral temple of 64 Yoginīs (Fig. 58) are not known for certain⁸⁵. Beglar⁸⁶ and Williams⁸⁷ suggest a 7th century date for Sirpur temple and Rāñipur Indralāṭh temple being a phototype of the former can be dated in the same epoch as well. The Nala rulers of the 7th century A.D. were pre-eminently Vaiṣṇavites and their

84. At present sixty temples are seen and almost a similar number of outlines of already lost temples are noticed on the rocky outcrop in one km. square area.

85. K. N. Mahapatra's assumption that the Indralāṭh brick temple was built by Śivagupta Bālārjuna of Somavaṃśī family is entirely based on guess work. Moreover, Bālārjuna was a staunch Śaivite and so he did not seem to have constructed two colossal Viṣṇu temples one at Sirpur and the other one at Rāñipur during his reign marked with the tension of foreign invasion and confusion. The early chronology of the Somavaṃśī kings are also marked with inconsistencies and scholars are at present inclined to assign Bālārjuna in the 8th/9th century A.D. While a 7th century date is mostly proposed for Sirpur as well as Rāñipur brick temple. *O.H.R.J.*, Vol. III, pp. 65-75 ; Vidya Dehejia, *Early temples of Orissa*, pp. 160-63 ; *History of Orissa*, pp. 174-176, Williams, *op.cit.*, pp. 160-162.

86. *O.H.R.J.*, *Ibid.*

87. Williams, *Ibid.*

political and cultural activities were mostly confined in Rājim, Kalahandi and Bolangir region and so the possibility of their association with the building of this temple may not be ruled out altogether. Beglar⁸⁸ is also inclined to take back the antiquity of 64 Yoginī as well as the Someśvara Śiva temple (Fig. 57) to the 8th century A.D.⁸⁹ In the present state of our knowledge, we cannot say with certainty the precise time and the regime, when the temples were built. This much we can say here that the accumulated artistic and architectonic acumen of the Nala age seemed to have had significant contribution to the building activities of this centre.

We believe that our comprehensive survey of art and architecture of south Kośala during the period under discussion reveals that there was unprecedented outburst of artistic activities. Keeping pace with the theoretical concept of the multiplication of gods and goddesses of the various patheons the rulers of the illustrious dynasty sincerely attempted to reflect them through the medium of stone. The economic prosperity of the kingdom combined with the benign patronage and zeal of the Nalas seem to have offered a most conducive atmosphere for prolific attainment of the artistic excellence of this age.

88. *ASI*, Vol. XIII, No. 49 Ranipur-Jural.

89. The theory of Fabri that the art movement of Ranipur Jharial is provincial off-shoot of the same movement of Bhubaneswar region is mere conjecture without basis. In our opinion the art activities of ancient Kośala and that of Kalinga are of two different and separate traditions viz. Kośaliyan and Kalingan orders respectively. Initially, both the school of art flourished independently and the blending of the two system, subsequently resulted in the efflorescence of the excellent Somavaṃśī monument of Bhubaneswar. Fabri, *op.cit.*, p. 101.

Conclusion

The study reveals that the illustrious Nalas ruled over a vast tract of land in the upper Mahanadī valley (including its tributaries) unifying the different disjointed principalities and diffusing the indelible imprints of the cultural traits far and wide. Roughly the Nala rule stood the test of time from 4th century A.D. down to 10th century A.D.¹ with a strange career of vicissitude. In course of their centuries of political history, they confronted many an adversary and still survived for a long period shifting their political centres to different parts of their far-flung territory contributing enormously to the cultural matrix of ancient South Kośala (i.e., North-west part of present Orissa and South-east region of M.P.). Based on authentic source data the thesis thus, presents an interesting exposition of Nala age that forms an essential chapter of Orissan History in particular and that of India in general.

The identification of the original homeland of the Nalas has been a matter of great controversy. However, our discussion² has divulged that the present Koraput, Kalahandi and Bastar regions constitute the original home-land of the Nalas. In fact, this region is a land of hoary antiquity and was known

1. Some scions of the Nala race even continued to rule upto 13th century A.D. with diminished political grandeur and the present day Zamindar family of Dhārkoṭ even today claim their descent from the Nala dynasty. See Chapter 4.
2. See Chapter 3.

by several names such as Dāruvana, Mahāvana, Daṇḍakāraṇya, Ātavika Kingdom, Vidhyādhardhivāsa, Niṣadha, Kāntāra, Kośala, Mahākośala, Dakṣiṇa Kośala and Trikaliṅga etc. and on the eve of the rise of the Nalas this part was mostly known by Niṣadha and Kāntāra. Subsequently they expanded their territory over the entire traditional South Kośala region (i.e. Western Orissa and Chhattisgarh region of M.P.). Situated at the centre of the ancient route between South and North India, this area although remains an important cultural junction in the South eastern part of central India. Under the benign rule of the Nalas the region witnessed unprecedented socio-political and cultural efflorescence contributing immensely to the Indian civilisation.

With the disintegration of the mighty Kuśāṇa and Śātavāhana empire the South Kośala region was parcelled out into petty principalities in the 3rd century A.D. North India, Deccan and the Kaliṅga regions were also in utter political confusion by that time. The Guptas rose and consolidated their position in north India. At this cataclysmic juncture the Vākātakas rose in the upper Deccan region and the Nalas emerged in the ancient Niṣadha and Kāntāra territory in the South East trans-Vindhyan region. In the struggle for the imperial supremacy the Guptas were crowned with spectacular success and Samudragupta even made a dashing raid into the South. As has been discussed³ the heroic march of the Gupta monarch into the Dakṣiṇāpatha was a gigantic military expedition without permanent subjugation. No doubt, the Nala king Vyāghrarāja admitted his defeat. But as soon as Samudragupta retreated, he consolidated his position and in no time South Kośala under the hegemony of the Nalas emerged as a great power.

The political history of the Nalas is full of activities and achievements with a farflung and extensive kingdom. The burgeoning authority of the Nalas posed a potent danger and

3. See Chapter 4.

challenge to the powerful Vākāṭakas. There was protracted struggle between the two powerful dynasties of the trans-Vindhyan region since their inception. In course of time the Nalas succeeded to occupy and overrun the Vākāṭaka capital and kingdom, and Nandivardhan the imperial capital of the Vākāṭakas became the seat of political activities of Nala king Bhavadaṭṭavarman. With occasional reverses, the Nalas eventually contributed significantly to their final fall. The Nalas united the smaller principalities of the Parvatadvārakas, the Meghas and the Rājarṣi-kula-tulyas. They fought many a pitched battle with the Vākāṭakas, the Śarabhapuriyās and the Western Gaṅgas and still survived to rule up to 10th century A.D. Under Bhavadaṭṭavarman and Skandavarman the Nalas reached the pinnacle of political paramountcy with their capital at Nandivardhan and Puṣkari. During the time of Arthapati the Vākāṭakas attacked and devastated Puṣkari and even killed him. But Skandavarman an invincible warrior of his age exhibited exceptional courage at this juncture and retaliated the Vākāṭakas⁴. He repaired and repopulated the devastated capital city and seemed to have marched triumphantly upto Nandivardhan. He created an extensive kingdom of his own conquest stretching over the whole of the traditional South Kośala region and contributed significantly to the final dismemberment of the Vākāṭaka kingdom. Under his hegemony, thus the Nala rule was consolidated on solid ground in south Kośala region and his regime witnessed unprecedented exuberance of political and cultural activities. The disjointed principalities of South Kośala perhaps, for the first time came under one political banner under Skandavarman's dynamic leadership ushering in a golden era of cultural efflorescence in the history of South Kośala. As testified by the wide circulation of gold coins, he left a vast fortune to his successors Stambha and Nandanarāja under whom the Nala kingdom thrived.

4. *Ibid.*

The rise of the Western Gaṅgas in Trikaliṅga region (Eastern-Koraput) posed a potent danger to the Nalas and due to political expediency they were compelled to move to the North part of their original kingdom. The Nalas established their rule in Mārgāguḍā plateau and Rājim regions and ruled for many generation upto 700 A.D. till they were supplemented by the Pāṇḍuvarṁśis. After a hiatus of 160 years the Nalas again emerged in Aska region of Ganjam district of Orissa and ruled for many generations in diminished glory till 1230 A.D.⁵

In course of their long and eventful career, the Nalas introduced a sound spirited administration that resulted in tremendous economic prosperity of the kingdom. The wide circulation of gold coins by most of the Nala kings amply testifies to the flourishing condition of the State. The prosperity of the kingdom is also reflected in the account of Hiuen Tsang who came to the Nala territory of South Kośala and seemed to have visited their capital city as well. Though the divine origin of kingship was popular in the Nala kingdom and the authority of the monarch was absolute, the Nala kings never traversed the religious dictates and were known to have ruled the State in conformity with the directives of the ancient *dharmaśāstras* and political treaties. The ruler believed that their fame consists in promoting *dharma*. It was invariably considered by the ruler and the ruled that violation of *dharma* consigns one in dungeon of five great sins⁶. The spirit of the State administration was pre-eminently welfare oriented. The kings lavishly donated holdings to Brāhmaṇas to promote religion and learning. They also established *satra* by donation of lands for the free feeding of the poors, the destitutes and the ascetics. As evident from the epigraph the spirit of Nala administration was essentially public welfare oriented and the kings sincerely cherished for the welfare of the subjects, the

5. *Ibid.*

6. *E.I.*, Vol. XIX, p. 103, Lines 15 and 16.

Brāhmaṇas and even the cows (*Svasti go-brāhmaṇa prajābhya siddharastu*)⁷.

Feudalism was in vogue in the kingdom. The state was divided into various administrative units such as *rāstra*, *viṣaya*, *bhoga* and *grāma* etc. There was a hierarchy of well organised civil service for the smooth administration of the State. Very probably a *mantri pariṣad* also existed to aid and advise the king. To secure and safeguard the extensive kingdom, the Nalas were known to have a vast military organisation, well equipped with arms and ammunition. Though there were *senāpaties* as evident from epigraphs, the Nala kings were the chief commander of the army and were known to have launched military expeditions in person. The stability of the kingdom combined with sound administrative system, thus offered a most conducive field for the multifaceted spectacular developments. A number of flourishing cities and towns grew up in the Nala kingdom and contributed substantially to the economic and cultural efflorescence of this age.

The social life of this age was rich and varied. Brāhmaṇism in all its manifestations spread in the hilly region through social mobility and acculturation giving rise to a synthesis of Āryan and tribal system. The four dimensional *varṇa* order was in vogue in the society. The Brāhmaṇas were at the apex of the social hierarchy. The ruler and the ruled had high regard for the Brāhmaṇas and Brāhmaṇa culture. Land grants were lavishly presented to the Brāhmaṇas by the Nala Kings. In the charter it was always duly admonished that who so-ever encroach upon the donated land would be consigned in the dungeon of hell. The Brāhmaṇas were thus invested with great honour in the social fabric of this age.

The Kṣatriyas occupied the 2nd rung of the ladder of the social fabric. They were the ruling and fighting class and were the protectors of all other *varṇas*. The Vaiśyas and the

7. *Ibid.*, Line 25.

Śūdras in order occupied their position in the lower level of the society. In the social plane of this age we rarely find instances of *Varṇasankaraṇa* and it appears that vocation was hereditary in character. The artisans, the craftsmen, the farmers and the traders mostly constituted these classes. The wide popularity and prevalence of *Varṇāśrama* order in the social complex of the Nala age is amply reflected in the account of Hiuen Tsang who seemed⁸ to have visited the South Kogala territory of the Nalas.

Joint family system was in vogue in the society and most of the Nala charters were known to have been donated to the male members of a family specifying their names for enjoying in common for generations. Parents and other ancestors were greatly revered by the rulers and the ruled. In fact, after the death ancestors seemed to have been deified by the Nala kings. There was immense love for the youngers and high regards for the elders in the family life of this age.

Aesthetic culture was very popular in the society. Both male and female were fond of ornaments. A rich variety of attires and draperies were known to have been used by the people as is testified by the sculptural evidence. Various delicious items of food and drinks mostly made of cereals and milk were popular in the society. Rice was the most staple food item and this region was famous for the thin-scented white rice. Wine made of mahuwa (Madhka) flower was also a popular item of drink in the society. Dance and music, feast and festivities were some of the primary sources of entertainment of the people. Hunting of birds and jungle games was popular items of outdoor entertainments of the male members and rearing of pets was indoor pastime of the women. In the society women seemed to have had a lovable and honoured place.

In the sphere of religion there was unprecedented efflorescence. Śaivism, Vaiṣṇavism and Śāktism flourished simultane-

8. See Chapter 4.

ously under the benign patronage of the eclectic Nala kings. In fact, the glorious epoch of the Nalas embraced the formative phase of the ecclesiastic exuberance of south Kośala. Other contemporary dynasties like the Vākātakas, the Śarabhapuriyās and the Mātharas etc. pre-eminently patronised one religion. But in sharp contrast Śaivism, Vaiṣṇavism and Śāktism flourished simultaneously and received equal patronage and promotion of the Nalas, who earnestly believe that their fame consists in upholding *dharma*.

“*Dharmasya mulaṁ cha yośo vadanti Tasmāt tadu-pārjaniyam*”⁹.

The antiquity of Śiva worship has a hoary beginning in India. But interestingly its rise and growth in south Kośala is closely connected with the emergence of the Nalas who were known to have dedicated their kingdom at the feet of Maheśvara and Mahāsena who created and bestowed the *rājya vibhava* on them (*Maheśvara mahāsenātsiṣṭa rājya vibhava*)¹⁰. This noble idea is conspicuously reflected in the Nala charters.

Under the early Nalas the *Mattamayura* or the *Śaiva siddhānta* system of Śaivism appeared to have flourished¹¹. Archaeological evidence indicates that the worship of *Śivaliṅga* with *Śaktipīṭha* and the representation of bull emblem have entered into the fold of the ritualistic paraphernalia of Śaivism. Many prominent Śaiva centres such as Badyanāth, Poḍāgaḍa and Triśul *Vihār* (at Mārāguḍā) etc., sprang up and a sort of monastic order of Śaivism evolved at the later centre. One *śaivācārya* ‘Dhimatīśvara’¹² was known to have presided over the institution.

Kadambaguha, the early seat of the priestly activities of

9. Sukla, *Prācīna Bastar*, p. 170.

10. *E.I.*, Vol. XIX, p. 102 ; *J.B.R.S.*, Vol. XXXIV, 1-11, p. 41.

11. See Chapter 7.

12. N. K. Sahu, Report of Archaeological excavations in the Upper Zonk valley in Nawapara subdivision of Kalahandi district, *Satavarsiki Smaranikā*, Khadial, 1983, p. VII.

the *Mattamayura* sect of Śaivism was very probably located in Kalahandi region and the sect appeared to have progressed at various centre like Temra¹³ near Rāṇīpur-Jhariāl. Later on Śāktism got amalgamated with Śaivism and gave rise to the mysterious cult of Tāntricism which subsequently had deep and revolutionary reflection in social and cultural order.

Vaiṣṇavism with a rich pantheon became the state religion under Skandavarman¹⁴ and the Vāsudeva-Kriṣṇa cult became popular in the kingdom. Under the Rājim group of Nalas the Nārāyaṇa cult thrived in Rājim region. Viṣṇu's incarnations become numerous and diverse in this phase. Gradually a system of synthesis of various cults and cult icons with Vaiṣṇavism took place at centres like Sāuntpur, Belkhandi, Rājim, Hariśaṅkar and Narasiṅghanāth etc. giving rise to the composite Hari-Hara cult. The process eventually seems to have culminated in the worship of the all pervasive Jagannāth.

The numerous and diverse panoramic phalanx of Śākta icons indicates that Śāktism had great appeal and accretion in the Nala Kingdom. The two-handed Durgā¹⁵ image brought to light by excavation containing the inscription 'Māheśvarī Bhavadā' is believed to be the *iṣṭadevī* of Nala king Bhavadatta¹⁶. Śiva and Śakti were conceived as one and inseparable and worshipped together. The find of *Yoni* and *Śaktipīṭha* together with other female deities at Mārāguḍā amply reflect that it was a great Śākta centre. In the fort of Asurgarh¹⁷ the Śākta divinities were known to have been installed and worshipped as guardian of quarters. At places like Belkhandi the Śākta divinities were worshipped in their manifold manifestations and some of the cult icons in their slender forms of *apsarās* and *alasakanyās* were known to have adorned the niches and facades of temples.

13. See page 285.

14. *E.J.*, Vol. XIX, pp. 100-104.

15. Fig. 9.

16. Page 303.

17. Page 305.

The Nala kings made lavish donations to promote religion for the salvation of the departed ancestors and to augment their own religious merit¹⁸. Many an exceptionally holy centre (*tīrthas*) sprang up in the kingdom. Brāhmaṇism in all its manifestations flourished in the Nala kingdom diffusing the religious trends and tendencies far and near.

The Nala period witnessed the great exuberance of art and architecture. The various religious philosophies with varied ideas and ideations had their echo and reflection in architectonic and sculptural representations and the temple building movement received the prolific impress of the age.

An imposing and fortified citadel and a civil township grew up at Poḍāgaḍa, the early capital site of the Nalas. The Poḍāgaḍa school of autochthonous art diction made its appearance at this centre. The 'Śiva-Pārvatī figure'¹⁹ in *yādavyu* position and the Yakṣa image²⁰ are some of the excellent specimens of this art idiom. On the *Satī* Pillars²¹ the portrait of the female figures are beautifully executed marked with elegance and delicacy. This early phase of plastic movement seemed to have been inspired by Gupta plastic idiom as well as indigenous tradition. The artistic trends of this school seem to have had its echo and reflection spread onto Mārāguḍā region as well. The Durgā Image²² in standing archer's pose appears to have been inspired by the same art movement. At Asurgarh another art centre of this early phase terracotta art witnessed its efflorescence. During this phase the temple building activities began in Nala kingdom and at Poḍāgaḍa²³ and Mārāguḍā²⁴ as indicated by archaeological evidence a sort of low square temple

18. *E.I.*, Vol. XXI, pp. 155-56; *O.H.R.J.*, Vol. VI, II-III, pp. 100-102.

19. Fig. 1.

20. Fig. 2.

21. Fig. 6.

22. Fig. 9.

23. Fig. 7.

24. Fig. 9.

with a sanctum and a small *maṇḍapa* in front evolved. The tradition of circular *yoginī* temple seems to have had its early and crude beginning in this phase and the circular brick temple traced out at Asurgarh²⁵ perhaps represents the earliest example of this kind of structure.

In the 5th/6th and 6th/7th century A.D. the temple architecture further evolved and at Badyanāth and Sāuntpur, the typical Kośaliyan order of temple architecture with a sanctum, a small vestibule, a pillared *maṇḍapa*, a vestibule and a gateway in horizontal plan developed.

Kārtikeya which finds prominent mention in the Nala charters has been represented in several iconographic forms²⁶. The Kārtikeya figure of Badyanāth with the typical wig type of head-dress has been exquisitely executed. The six-headed and twelve-handed Kārtikeya figure of Khadial is an interesting and marvellous piece of art work. The rich variety of divinities of Śaiva pantheon such as Śiva²⁷, Umā-Maheśvara²⁸, Śiva-Bhairava²⁹, Gaṇeśa³⁰ and Pārvatī³¹ etc. have been represented and executed in consummate iconographic forms. The Trivikram³² Viṣṇu image of Sāuntpur with excellent embellishment is a superb specimen of art idiom. The dancing scene³³ has been portrayed in a lively manner marked with an aura of gliding movement and linear rhythm.

In the 7th/8th Century A.D. the plastic and techtonic movement appears to have reached its climax in the Nala Kingdom. During this phase many flourishing art centres such

25. N. K. Sahu, Archaeological findings in Asurgarh, *New dimension of Tourism in Orissa*, pp. 9-12.

26. Figs. 16, 17, 18, 19.

27. Fig. 26.

28. Figs. 38, 39, 40.

29. Figs. 23, 24.

30. Figs. 20, 27, 28.

31. Fig. 31.

32. Fig. 32.

33. Fig. 45.

as Rājim, Saintalā, Belkhandi, Pāṭnāgarh, Badyanāth and Rāṇīpur-Jhariāl etc. developed contributing significantly to the artistic heritage of south Kośala. The artist transcending all barriers seems to have succeeded to render the composition of the flying *vidhyādhara*s³⁴ weightless so as to float in the celestial sky. The belle³⁵ looking at the mirror is by far a superb and excellent piece of art idiom of this exuberant cultural epoch.

The thesis prepared by careful study of the hitherto known source materials thus, presents a holistic history of the illustrious Nalas highlighting the cultural efflorescence of their age. Many more new evidence on their history and culture may come forth in future through explorations and excavations of the Nala sites and until such a discovery is made, I believe, the present work would stand as the most exhaustive history of the Nalas.

With an humble beginning the Nalas succeeded to reach the pinnacle of political paramountcy despite the strong adversaries of the neighbouring regions and furnished a glaring example of dynastic rule roughly in a span of about 700 years quite rare in the annals of contemporary dynasties. They boldly encountered challenges and nibbled down in a passage of time giving to the posterity an ideal administration of benevolent monarchs and enriching the cultural heritage which continued to flourish in the similar manner in the several succeeding centuries.

34. Fig. 47.

35. Fig. 53.

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20	27	possible	possibly
21	6	the unique	unique
	83	prachy	prachya
23	4	with	with
39	10	strongly	wrongly
43	6	waingange	Wainganga
	27	Mikal	Maikal
46	6	not	donot
47	57	Narkandeya	Markandeya
		Purana	Purana
51	1	beento	been
56	22	nention	mention
63	6	them different	different
71	12	Capilal	Capital
72	1	Amarali	Amrali
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75	15	gpod	good
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	24	Bhavadattavarman	Skandavarman
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97	21	thoss	these
98	12	Siva	Saiva
108	11	Kosata	Kosala
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	21	10 x 12km	10 to 12km
110	9	that under	that was under
123	6	Bhutapati	Bhupati
124	17	niyam	niyam
125	8	the kautilyan,	the Kautilyan it is
126	28	it	it is
127	18	eoncive	Concive
128	25	vaso	yaso
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	30	actitities	activities

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148	1	ofter	after
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Plate No.—4



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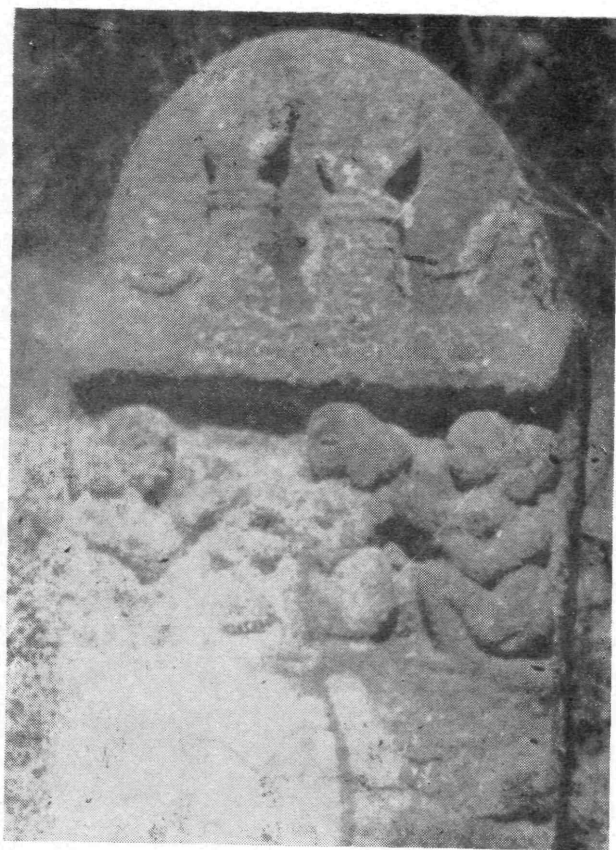


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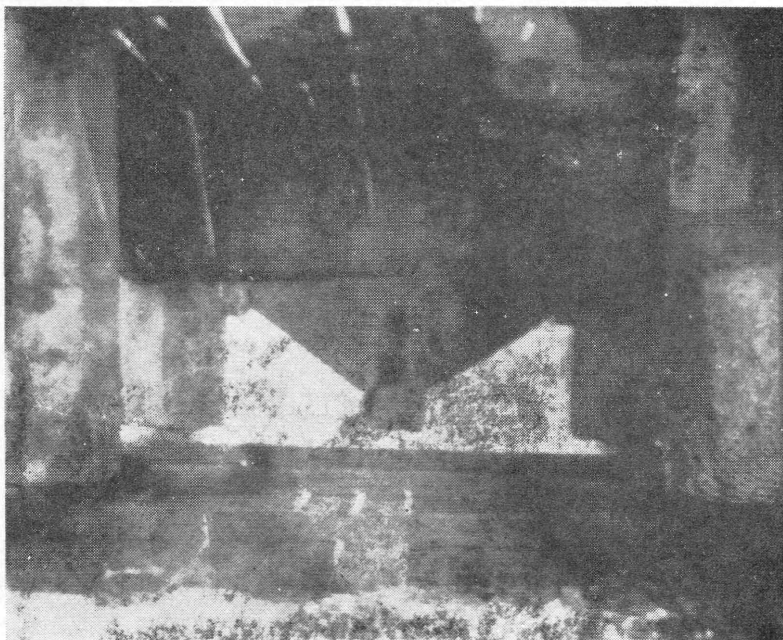


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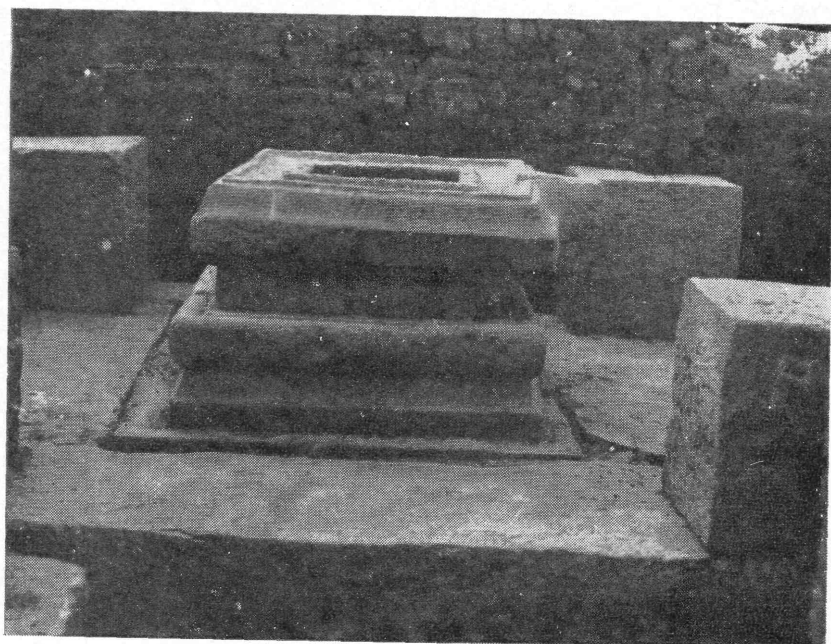


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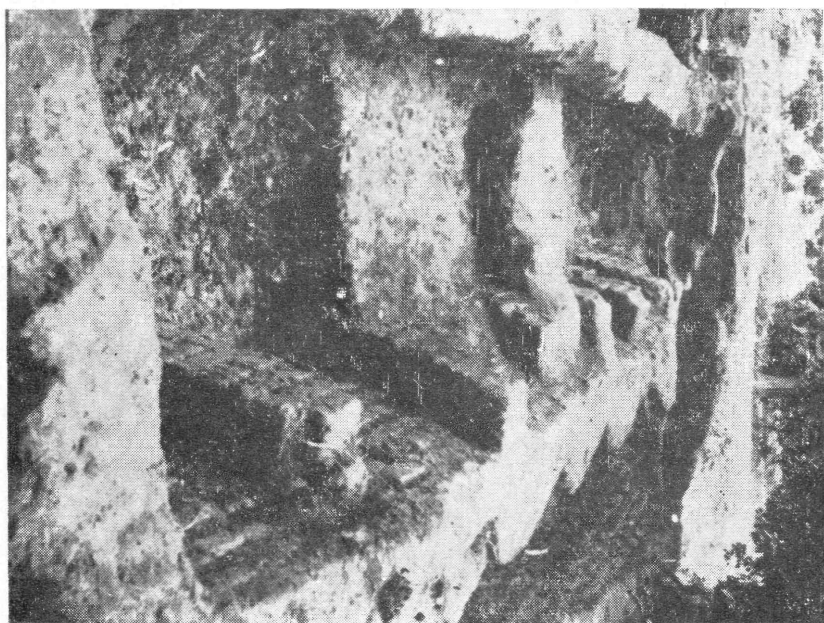


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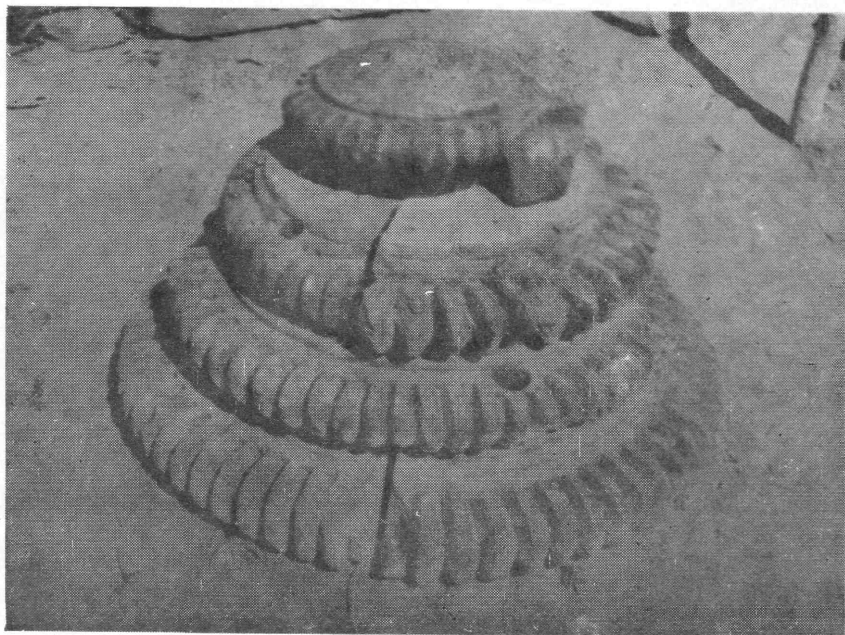


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Plate No. 20



Plate No.—21

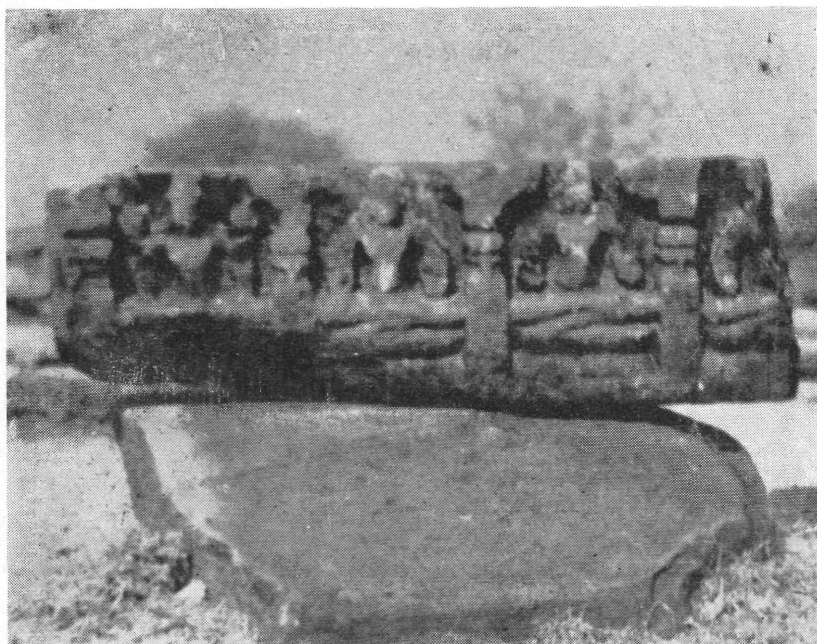


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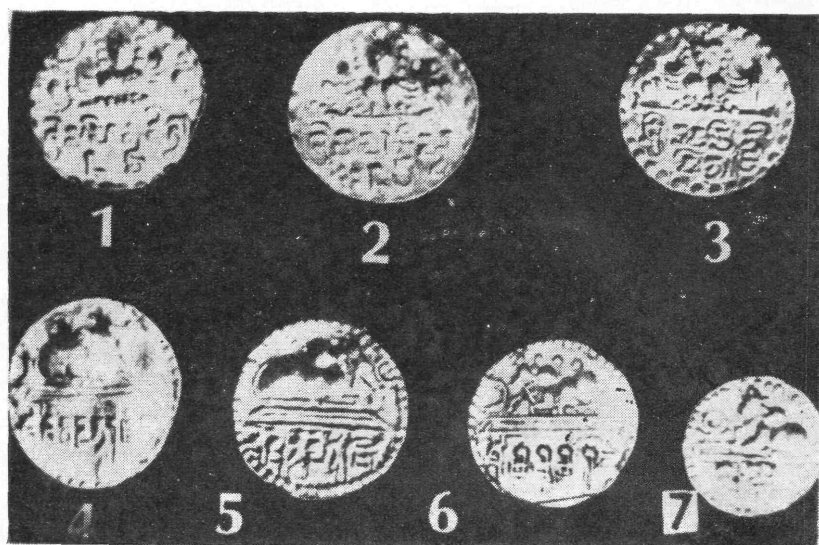


Plate No.—23



Plate No.—24



Plate No.--25



Plate No.—26

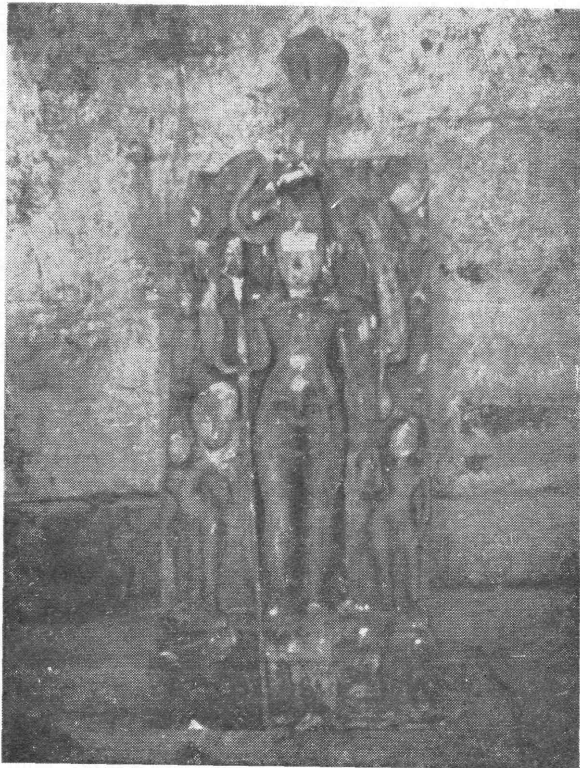


Plate No.—27



Plate No.—28



Plate No —29

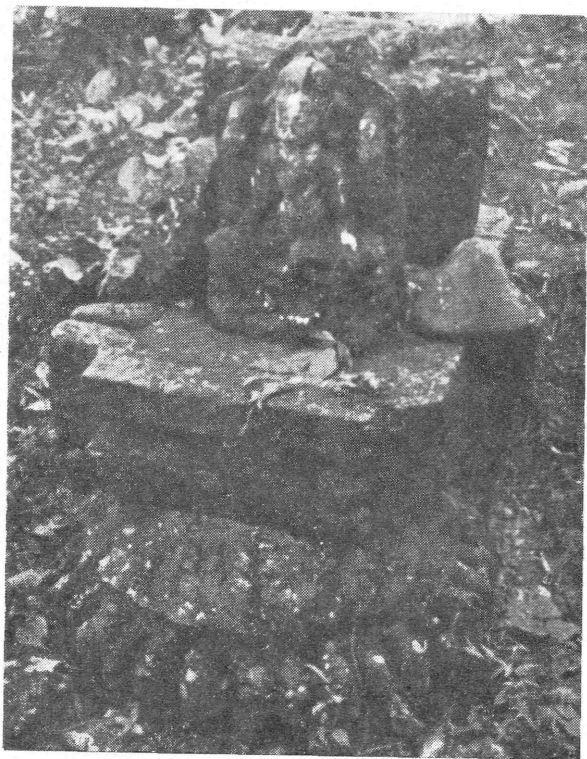


Plate No.—30



Plate No.—31

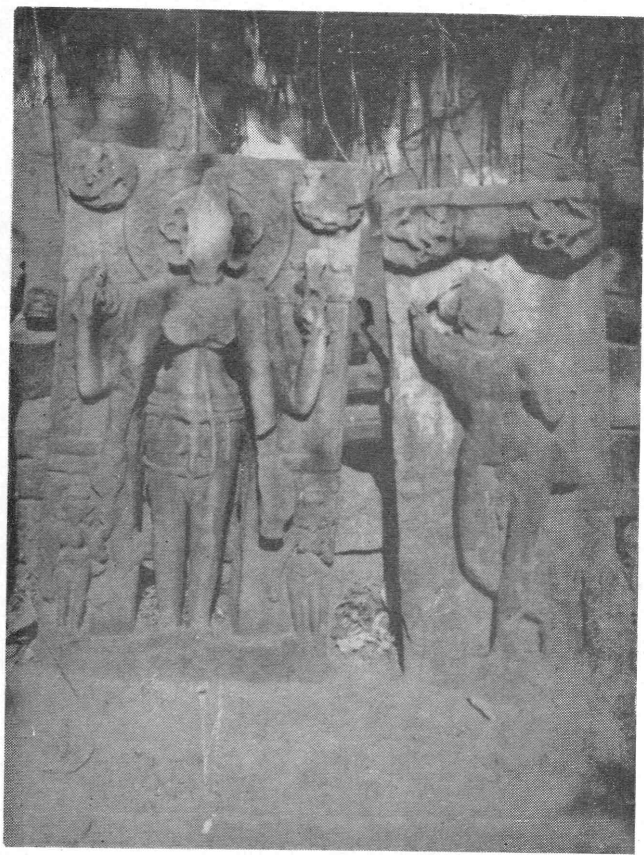


Plate No.—32



Plate No.—33



Plate No.—34

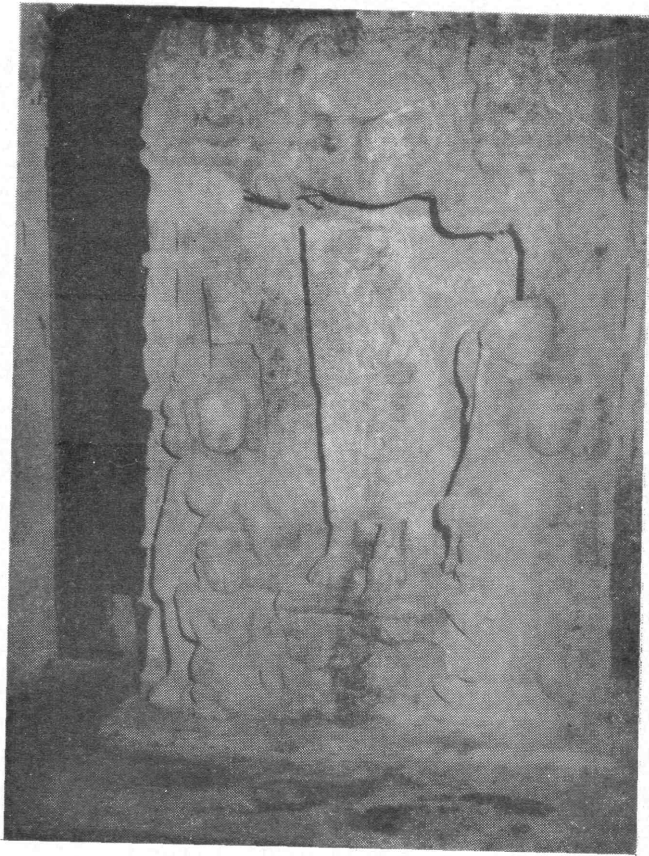


Plate No.—35



Plate No.—36



Plate No —37



Plate No.—38

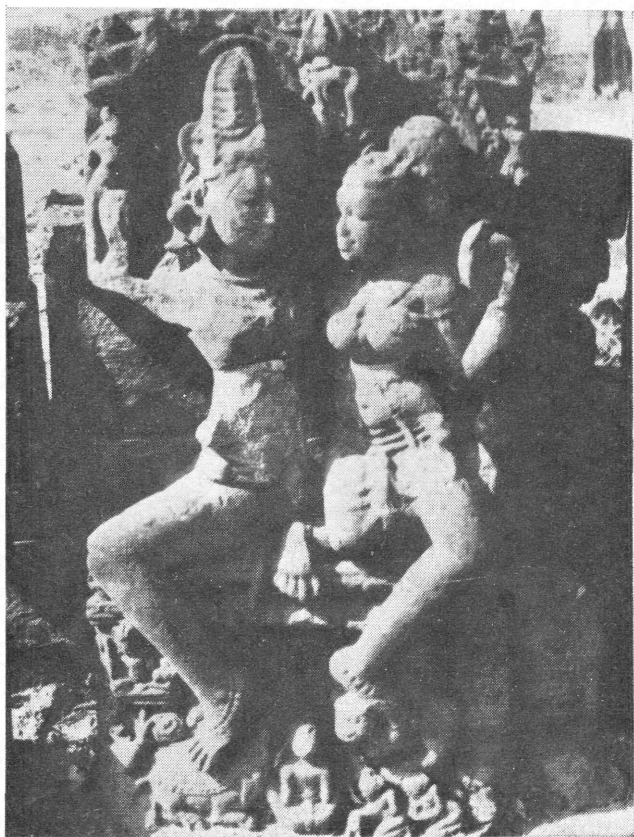


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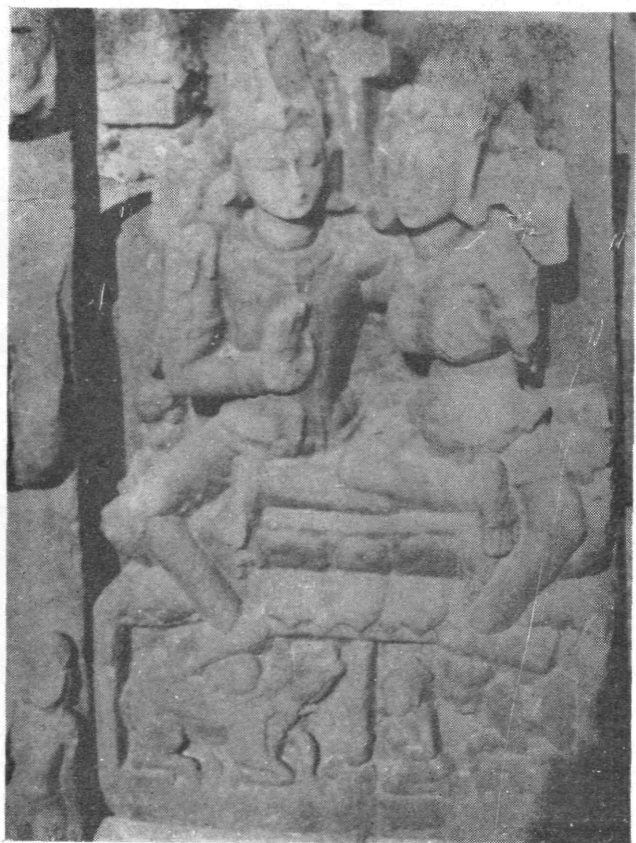


Plate No.—40



Plate No —41



Plate No.—42

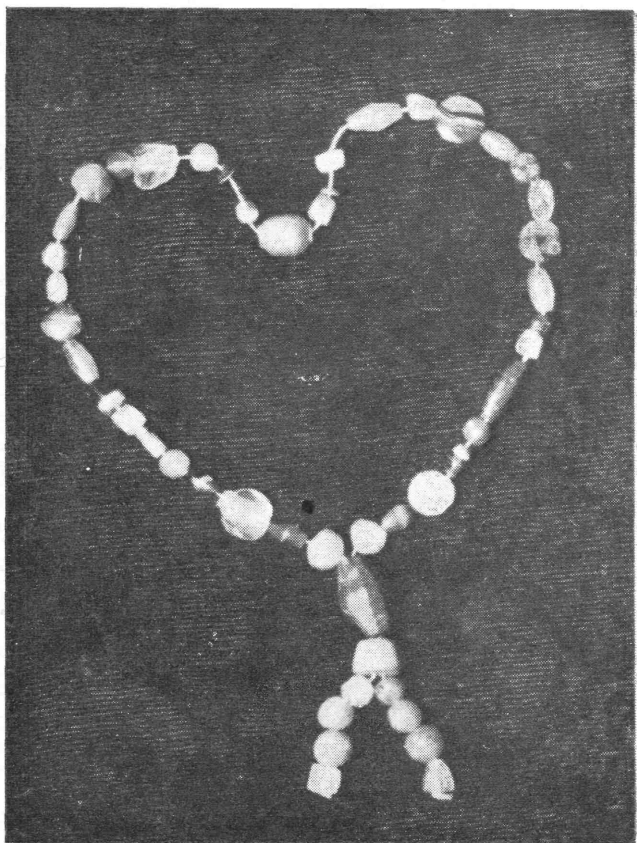


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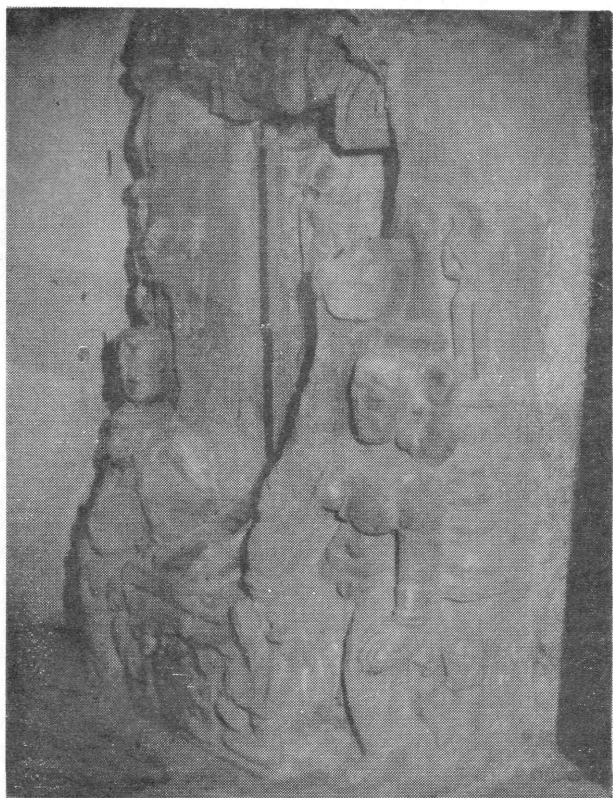


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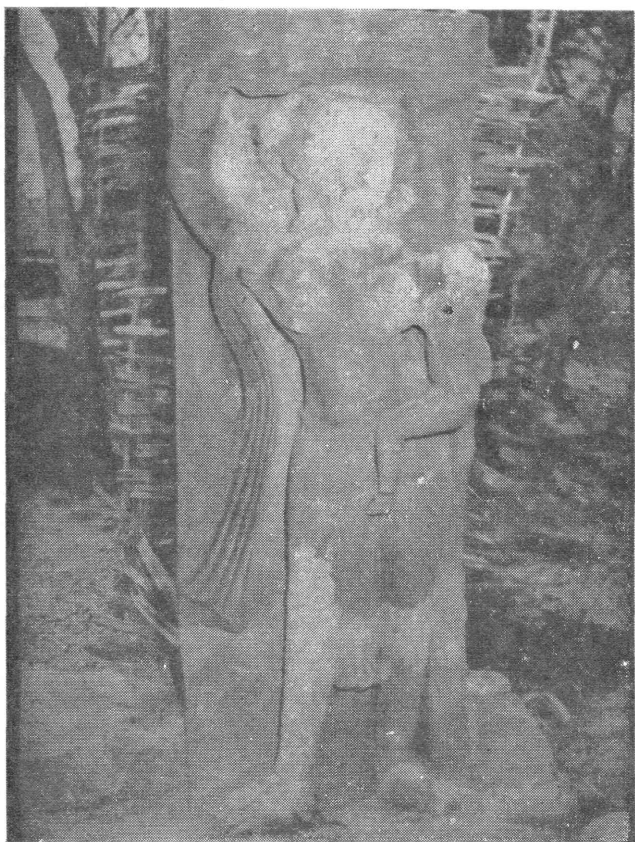


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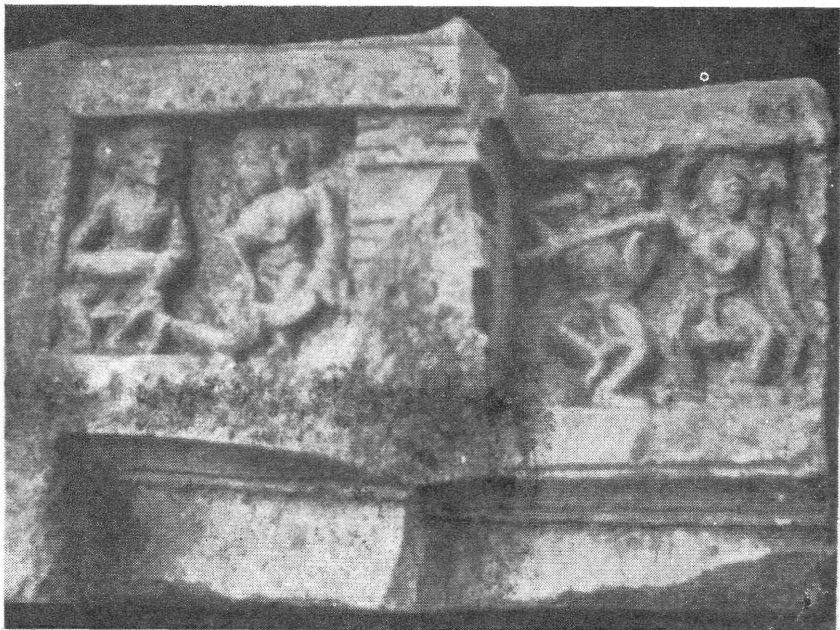


Plate No. 46



Plate No. 47A



Plate No. 47B



Plate No.--48



Plate No. 49



Plate No—50



Plate No.—51



Plate No.--52

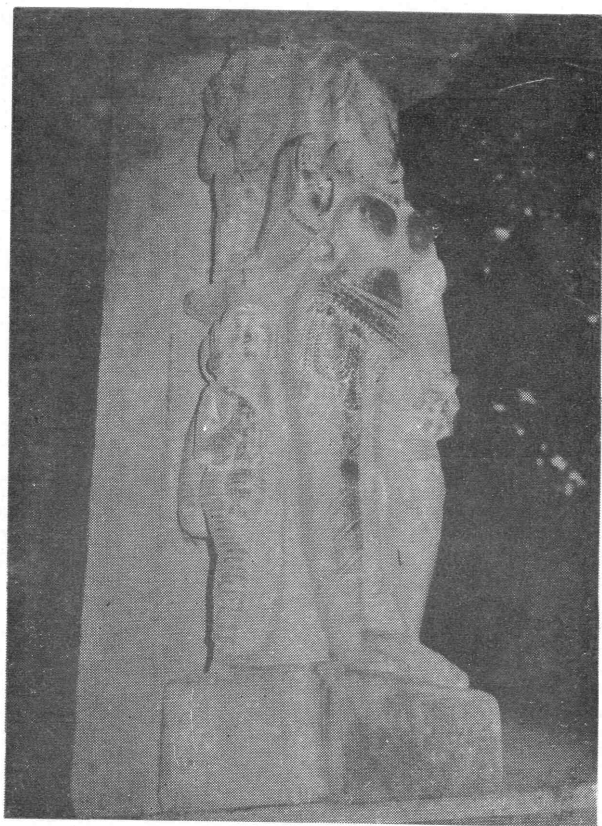


Plate No—53.



Plate No.—54



Plate No.—55



Plate No.—56

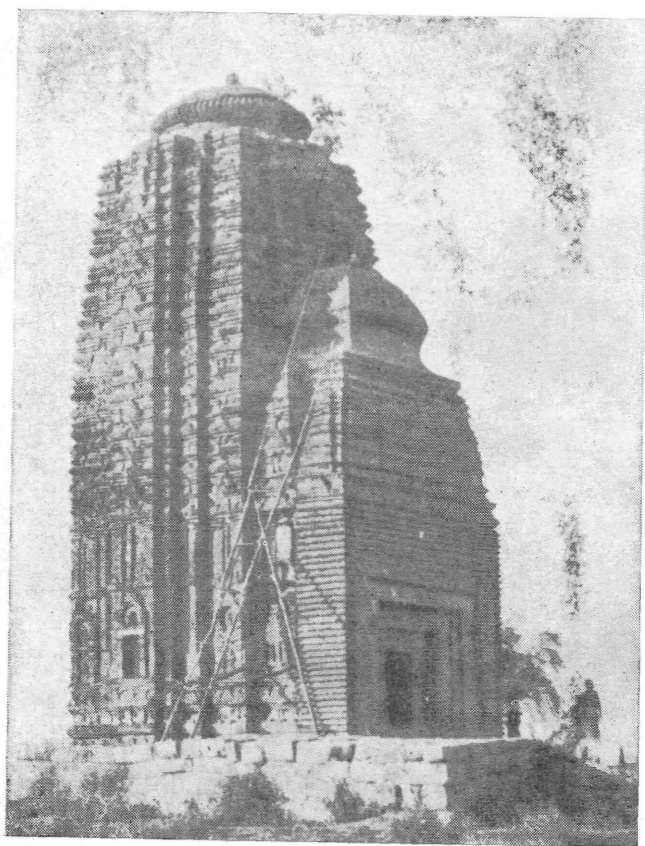


Plate No.—57

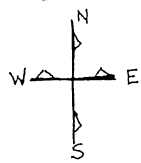


Plate No.—58

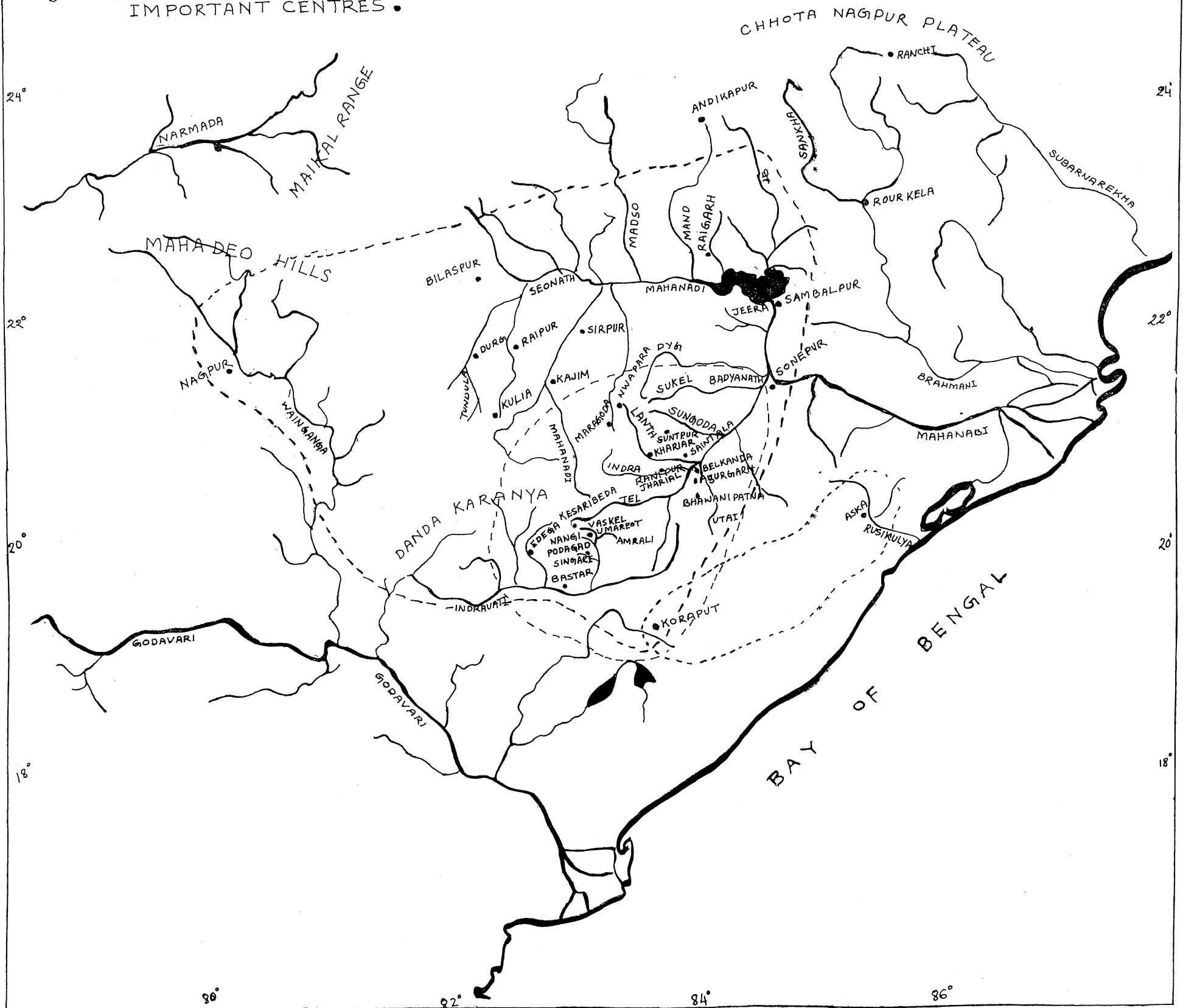


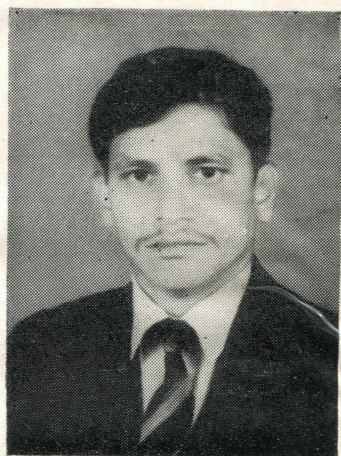
MAP OF NALA TERRITORY

SCALE 1:25,00000 OR 1CM TO 25KMS



NALA EMPIRE AT ITS ZENITH -----
 TRADITIONAL NALA KINGDOM -----
 KINGDOM OF THE LATER NALS
 IMPORTANT CENTRES •





THE AUTHOR

Dr. Chandra Bhanu Patel (born 1953) is a keen scholar of Indian History, Culture and Archaeology with a brilliant academic career beaded with Foreign and Indian archaeological trainings. He obtained B.A. degree with 1st class and distinction (1974) and topped the M.A. examination in History and archaeology of Sambalpur University in 1976. During 1982-83, he studied Danish Archaeology and Museum Technique at the famous National Museum of Copenhagen as a Fellow of Royal Danish Ministry of Education. In 1984, he obtained Diploma Degree in Archaeology from the Archaeological Survey of India, New Delhi and Ph.D. Degree from Utkal University in 1988.

He participated in the prestigious excavations of Harappan site at Banawali (Haryana) in A.S.I. Project and at Maraguda Valley of Orissa in State Archaeology Project. Dr. Patel addressed the international Student Centre at Copenhagen and is actively engaged in various archaeological explorations and Survey works and has contributed many important papers to various research journals within and outside the country. He is working as an Archaeological Officer in Orissa State Archaeology and presently engaged in post Doctoral research project on Mahanadi valley civilization.

